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## ABSTRACT

This report is the third part of a policy research study of the counselor's role in Texas schools. It was conducted as a follow up on a key finding from a previous study, which led to the recommendation that counselors be relieved of extraneous duties in order to concentrate on guidance and counseling services to students. Case studies of 21 schools relating the role of the counselor to the broader educational context is presented. Specific data on actual counseling and guidance programs and practices is summarized or included along with data on the needs of students, counselors, other school staff, parents, and community members. Individual interviews and focus groups were used. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) Comprehensive Model developed in another part of this overall study was introduced so that participants could analyze the model in relationship to counseling and guidance in their schools. The model consists of four components: (1) guidance curriculum; (2) responsive services; (3) individual planning; (4) system support. The methodology is presented, and case studies are presented for elementary, middle or junior high school, high school, and multilevel schools. Interview protocols are appended. (EMK)


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# Texas School Counseling and Guidance Programs Case Studies Report



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**Texas  
School Counseling  
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Case Studies Report**

**Texas Education Agency  
July 1996**

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# Texas School Counseling and Guidance Programs: Case Studies Report

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## CHAPTER 1

# Public School Counseling and Guidance in Texas: Programs and Practices

### Context for the Study

One of the key findings from a five-year study of the effects of various educational reforms on the school experiences of Texas high school students at risk of dropping out was the lack of time that counselors have available for counseling and guidance services, as reported by students and school staff persons (TEA, 1994b). In that study, counselors reported that extraneous duties, especially paperwork and test administration, prevent them from performing counseling and guidance activities with students. Allocation of counselors' time is also an issue of concern to the State Board of Education, as expressed in former 19 TAC §75.2: "Every effort should be made to relieve counselors of extraneous tasks so that they may appropriately meet their responsibilities to consult and counsel with students as to their individual educational needs, goals, and aims." In addition, as Texas student enrollment increases, as characteristics of students become even more diverse, and as challenges students face become increasingly complex, the widespread perception exists that students' needs for school counseling and guidance services are rapidly increasing. For these reasons, in 1994, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) began a two-year statewide study of public school counseling and guidance.

A policy research report (TEA, 1994a) from the first part of this study presented demographic information on counselors and student-to-counselor ratios obtained from the agency's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). It also described the TEA Comprehensive Model, which first appeared in *The Comprehensive Guidance Program for Texas Public Schools* (TEA, 1990). In the TEA (1990) guide, this model was recommended as an ideal for organizing and implementing successful counseling and guidance programs and practices for all students.

The second part of the study, beginning in August 1994, was a statewide survey of counselors about their perceptions of current versus ideal time spent on various counseling and other school-related duties, as well as opinions about priorities, support and staff development needed, adequacy of resources, services provided, and coordination of services for students. Results from this survey, along with results from the entire study, will be published in a final report in the summer of 1996.

This report presents results from the third part of this study, the case studies, summarizing or including specific data on actual counseling and guidance programs and practices and on the needs of students, counselors, other school staff, parents, and community members at 21 school campuses across the state. This was accomplished through individual interviews with the counselor and the principal and through two focus group interviews—one with a group of school staff, parent, and community representatives (adult group) and the other with a group of students. The TEA Comprehensive Model was introduced in the individual and focus group interviews so participants could analyze the model in relationship to counseling and guidance programs and practices in their schools.

The TEA (1990) Comprehensive Model is composed of four components: *guidance curriculum*, *responsive services*, *individual planning*, and *system support*. The purpose of the *guidance curriculum* component is to help all students develop basic life skills. The seven recommended areas to be addressed by the guidance curriculum are (a) self-esteem development; (b) motivation to achieve; (c) decision-making, goal-setting, planning, and problem-solving skills; (d) interpersonal effectiveness; (e) communication skills; (f) cross-cultural effectiveness; and (g) responsible behavior. These guidance areas are taught

through objectives-based classroom lessons, which extend from prekindergarten through Grade 12, with the levels of mastery expanding each year, as is developmentally appropriate.

*Responsive services* are interventions with students whose immediate concerns or problems put their continued personal, social, career, and/or educational development at risk. Commonly identified concerns include improving academic success, peer relationships, and school attitudes and behaviors; dropout prevention; and helping students deal with abuse, death, family divorce, and sexuality issues. Addressing these areas can include one-to-one counseling; group counseling or referral to outside agencies; consultation with teachers, parents, and administrators; monitoring students' progress; possible referral of students to special programs; and pairing students with adult mentors.

In *individual planning* each student is guided to plan, monitor, and manage his or her own educational, career, personal, and social development through channeling resources to students to help them develop and implement their own plans. Students are assisted through provision of relevant, accurate, and unbiased information; using age-appropriate, objectives-based guidance activities; and advising appropriate academic placement.

The *system support* component describes services and management activities that indirectly benefit students. Services include consultation with teachers and administrators, support for parent education and community relations, implementation of standardized testing programs, participation in campus-based

school improvement planning and goal setting, and communicating students' perspectives to policy makers and instructional planners. Management activities include developing and managing the counseling and guidance program; attending counselor-specific staff development; reaching out to the community; and developing appropriate policies, procedures, and guidelines.

A successful counseling and guidance program, as defined through the TEA (1990) Comprehensive Model, includes a balanced allocation of resources to each component. All components are interrelated and involve counselors, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community. For each grade level, a range of percentages of time to be spent on each TEA Comprehensive Model component is recommended, where differences across grade levels reflect developmental changes in students' needs, as shown in Table 1.

Responsibilities subsumed under the four TEA Comprehensive Model components are met through performance of six basic counseling roles: (a) guidance, (b) counseling, (c) consultation, (d) coordination, (e) assessment, and (f) program management. Within the TEA (1990) guide to the model, relationships among roles and components are defined and discussed. In addition, differences between the TEA Comprehensive Model and more traditional counseling models are explained. Other sections describe the counseling and guidance program roles and responsibilities of counselors and other school staff under the model; the scope and sequence of an ideal guidance curriculum by grade level; and how to plan, organize, design, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive counseling and guidance program.

**Table 1**  
**Recommended Time Distribution Across Components of the Comprehensive Guidance Program**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Elementary Schools</b>	<b>Middle/Junior High Schools</b>	<b>High Schools</b>
Guidance Curricula	35% - 45%	35% - 40%	15% - 25%
Responsive Services	30% - 40%	30% - 40%	25% - 35%
Individual Planning	5% - 10%	15% - 25%	25% - 35%
System Support	10% - 15%	10% - 15%	15% - 20%
Non-Guidance	0%	0%	0%

Source: Table compiled from *The Comprehensive Guidance Program for Texas Public Schools* (TEA, 1990), pp. 19-21.

Currently, the TEA Comprehensive Model is required only for elementary counselors funded through competitive grants from TEA (TEC §§33.001-33.006). Parallel to the TEA Comprehensive Model is a personnel evaluation form for counselors, the *Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC)*, developed by the Texas Counseling Association (1992). The TEMPSC may be used by the TEA grant-funded counselors for self-evaluation or by their supervisors. A number of districts in Texas have adopted the TEA Comprehensive Model for use with other counselors in their districts. The Texas Counseling Association and related associations are encouraging the use of the TEA Comprehensive Model in all districts across the state. It is seen as a way to make counseling and guidance services more consistent across campuses and districts. Following the model can help focus counselors' time more on counseling and guidance duties and less on other non-counseling duties. It can also be used to help clarify the counselor's professional identity and roles in relationship to those of the district/campus administration, teachers, other school staff, students, parents, and

community members and agencies in the school counseling and guidance program.

## Case Studies Summary: The State of Practice

The following discussion contrasts specific aspects of the TEA Comprehensive Model with descriptions of public school counseling and guidance programs and practices in the 21 case study schools, as summarized from the interviews. Table 2 presents key dimensions for traditional versus comprehensive practices, organized by the general areas of program design, program resources (including human and material) and organization (including use of evaluation), and program access/results. This chapter concludes with a synthesis of case study participants' ideas for defining comprehensive programs and support needed for successful implementation, since participants all agreed that the ultimate goal of counseling and guidance is to meet the needs of all students.

<b>Table 2</b> <b>Key Dimensions of the TEA Comprehensive Model vs. Traditional Models of Counseling and Guidance Organized by Relevant Program Areas</b>		
<b>Program Area</b>	<b>Traditional (Reactive)</b>	<b>Comprehensive (Proactive)</b>
Program Design (Input)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervention/crisis oriented only</li> <li>• Unstructured program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned, based on needs assessment and priorities, prevention oriented</li> <li>• Designed program</li> </ul>
Program Resources and Organization (Process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on services</li> <li>• Information dissemination</li> <li>• Clerical administrative task oriented</li> <li>• Counselors only</li> <li>• Unmeasured results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on program</li> <li>• Developmental curriculum</li> <li>• Student goal attainment oriented</li> <li>• All school staff and the community</li> <li>• Evaluated, improvement based on evaluation results</li> </ul>
Program Access/Results (Output)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual guidance and counseling only</li> <li>• Uneven service to students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group guidance and counseling</li> <li>• Consistent service to all students</li> </ul>

Source: Major portion of table from *The Comprehensive Guidance Program for Texas Public Schools* (TEA, 1990), p. 7.

## Program Design

### *How were counseling and guidance program missions, goals, and philosophies developed across 21 campuses, and what did they address?*

Interviewees at about half the campuses reported having written counseling and guidance program missions; verbal or written missions were often developed districtwide by counselors with input from parents, teachers, and administrators. For one campus providing special education services to students with disabilities, program mission, goals, and objectives were based on those for the district but tailored to meet the needs of students served on campus. At some campuses, counseling and guidance program missions were implemented following the TEA Comprehensive Model. At one campus, no formal written or defined program mission existed, but the counselor was in the process of meeting with teachers to define the counselor's role and function. At other campuses, written mission statements for the campus were in place, but no written counseling and guidance mission had been delineated. Even at the only campus in the study without a program (and no counselor), staff interviewed thought counseling and guidance just needed to be done.

Generally, counseling and guidance program missions were student-centered, focusing on preparing students to be successful adults, helping them achieve their full potential, encouraging them to stay in school and prepare for the future. When asked about program missions, interviewees often discussed expectations for counselors. Most mission and goals statements called for successfully involving parents; providing counseling and guidance services that meet students' emotional, social, academic, career, and personal needs; and teaching good coping and communications skills, problem-solving, personal responsibility, character education, and respect for others. At the elementary level, mission statements also called for provision of developmental guidance to students at an early age to help reduce the need for crisis intervention services as students become older.

### *What were the expectations for counselors and for counseling and guidance programs?*

Most interviewees noted expectations for counselors, not for programs. The range of expectations included

- Primarily, those set forth formally in districtwide counseling and guidance programs, where these

were established, and in the TEA Comprehensive Model, where it was the primary program guide;

- The counselor giving direction to the counseling and guidance program with school staff and parents making the program happen;
- The counselor serving as a guide, mentor, and advocate for students; and
- The counselor focusing on direct student services rather than on paperwork, testing administration, or student class scheduling.

Interviewees at all schools mentioned that some parents and community members had no knowledge of what counselors and programs do, while others expected counselors to solve problems for everyone and to serve as "surrogate parents."

Interviewees at all 21 campuses reported that problems students face are becoming increasingly more serious and complex, reflecting changes in society. Counselors are expected to help students handle more serious social problems than in the past, usually without increases in counseling and guidance resources. These problems include poverty, violence, gang involvement, dysfunctional families, child abuse, substance abuse, increasing numbers of students who are at risk of dropping out, and students who lack needed personal and social skills that usually are taught in the homes of most students.

### *What types of needs assessments were used to develop, adjust, clarify, and improve counseling and guidance programs and to better define counselors' roles?*

All counselors interviewed reported using a variety of informal needs assessments, while about half also used more formal needs assessments at either the campus or district level, usually through written surveys. They also were monitoring consistently the types of referrals for counseling and guidance services made by teachers, administrators, parents, and student self-referrals as a basis for planning service delivery. Also common was the use of frequent, informal contacts with teachers about students' needs. For students receiving special education services, counseling and guidance needs were determined and updated through the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) process and documented in the Individual Education Plan (IEP). Less frequent across campuses was the use of formal (often written) needs assessments, surveys, and other approaches in support of program improvement and better definition of counseling roles, including: a

district counseling director survey of principals about program needs and of parents about parenting needs; an advisory committee used as a platform to seek advice about students' needs, set program goals, and evaluate program success; counselors using information gained from campus site-based improvement committees for program planning; a counselor-conducted written needs assessment at the beginning of the year to plan program services; and a needs assessment taking place at the district level through the strategic planning process.

Counselors were generally positive about the potential usefulness of the TEA Comprehensive Model in providing clearer definition for counselors' roles and responsibilities, as long as adequate funding is available for the counselors and support staff needed to fully implement a developmentally comprehensive program. Counselors noted two instances of districtwide programs being based on or having incorporated the TEA Comprehensive Model in which the result had been the deletion or reduction of non-counseling duties, such as paperwork and student class scheduling responsibilities, thereby increasing the time available to provide direct services to students. Other counselors saw use of the model as a means to justify elimination of extraneous, non-counseling duties from their job responsibilities.

#### *How were preventive programs described?*

A key characteristic of a preventive program is to serve each student's special needs before the manifestation of a crisis. A preventive program uses developmental processes and building students' skills to reach the most students and to increase the potential for success. The most frequently reported preventive activity was classroom guidance. Interviewees at elementary schools noted relatively more time spent on guidance curriculum than those interviewed at middle/junior and high schools, where more time was spent on responsive services.

#### *To what extent were counseling and guidance programs perceived to be prevention-oriented?*

Interviewees at the 20 campuses with counselors felt that programs ideally needed to be prevention-oriented to be effective. Even at the campus with no counselor, interviewees thought programs should include both prevention and intervention. Programs at all six elementary schools and the special education campus were viewed to be spending the majority of time on

preventive activities. At the high school and the multilevel secondary campus, a crisis or intervention orientation prevailed. Interviewees at high schools also talked about counselors having little time to spend on preventive activities, with students speaking about the need for counselors to be more visible and available to students, educating students about types of services available, and spending more time seeking out students with needs. Of middle/junior high campuses, one program was considered to have a prevention focus, another program emphasized prevention and intervention equally, and the other four were focused primarily on intervention.

### **Program Resources and Organization**

#### *What types of services were being delivered and what content was being addressed by school counseling and guidance programs?*

Across schools, counselors reported conducting individual counseling sessions with students. Group counseling sessions were conducted with students at the six elementary schools, the special education campus, three of the high schools, and three of the middle/junior high schools. These groups were formed on the basis of students' common needs to help them with issues such as substance abuse problems, divorce in their families, dysfunctional families, grief, low self-esteem, potential school failure, and sexual abuse.

At all elementary schools, the special education campus, and half of the campuses with middle or high school grades, classroom guidance lessons were conducted. Most often in elementary schools topics were addressed by counselors coming to classrooms on a weekly or biweekly basis. A wide variety of topics were addressed, especially self-esteem enhancement, but also including study, coping, test-taking, and self-help skills; positive life styles choices; respect for others; appropriate behavior; dealing with cultural differences; how to say "no"; and stress management. When classroom guidance was reported at the high school level, it generally was less than 10 percent of counselor time.

Counselors all mentioned involvement with student transitions within and across grade levels and schools. This was especially true at the middle/junior high campuses where counselors worked with the incoming students from elementary schools and the outgoing students to high schools. High school counselors also

reported extensive activities informing students of postsecondary career and higher education options.

Across campuses, counselors also reported many other duties performed as part of counseling and guidance programs. At 12 of 18 schools with achievement testing and other testing programs, counselors were responsible for testing program administration. At 11 of the 13 campuses with middle or high school grades counselors were responsible for scheduling students into classes.

***How did the perceived emphasis on TEA Comprehensive Model components vary across campuses?***

Interviewees at the elementary level estimated the highest percentage of guidance and counseling program time being spent on guidance curriculum, followed by responsive services, individual planning, and system support. Closely similar to elementary schools, most program time on the special education campus was devoted to guidance curriculum, followed by individual planning, responsive services, and system support. In contrast, responsive services was allocated the highest percentage of program time in middle/junior high schools, followed by individual planning, and then guidance curriculum and system support at low percentages. Similarly, responsive services and individual planning were deemed to take the larger percentages of time in high schools, followed by guidance curriculum and system support.

***What were the specific counseling and guidance approaches for helping students focus on individual goal attainment?***

In all schools, a variety of approaches were used to help more students focus on individual goal attainment. At six schools interviewees reported contact with students who had failing grades on a six-weeks basis. Another approach was bringing guidance curriculum into classrooms, as well as training teachers in conflict resolution and classroom management so they are able to help deliver and reinforce some of the content of the guidance curriculum. Approaches reported at middle/junior high schools included a leadership conference for all seventh graders, school-wide drug prevention efforts, tutoring and mentoring programs with local universities to reach at-risk youth, and bringing in resources and speakers from the community to expose students to different vocational choices and provide information to students about real job situations and the kind of skills needed for em-

ployment. Among approaches mentioned for focusing on student goal attainment at high schools were guidance centers with software and databases for students to obtain information about careers and postsecondary education; books and videos for students to view on areas such as teen pregnancy, self-esteem, and peer pressure, helping counselors to reach more students; career/college fairs where representatives from local colleges, businesses, and the military talk with students about various postsecondary options; shadowing, mentoring, and interning opportunities where students can learn directly about specific businesses; and teacher support in preventing violence, particularly when trained by counselors in skills such as classroom management, conflict resolution, small group counseling, supporting after school programs, tutoring, and mentoring.

***What was the perceived impact of inadequate resources, materials, budgets on the delivery of the counseling and guidance programs?***

Interviewees at all campuses stated that without adequate resources they could not deliver their ideal counseling and guidance programs. This was especially true regarding an adequate student-to-counselor ratio and an adequate number of support staff, especially clerical staff. At all grade levels, counselors could not fully perform their duties when they did not have appropriate office space or lacked personal computers or telephones.

Across campuses, counselors noted that many of their duties require paperwork, detracting from their capacity to proactively enhance their programs. They reported staying in the evenings or taking work home in the attempt to perform all their duties and responsibilities. Common across secondary school levels was the desire for an additional counselor to help ensure implementation of more proactive practices. Other duties common to the middle and high school counselors involved handling student registration, enrollment, scheduling, and administration of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). High school counselors estimated spending 25 to 75 percent of their time on paperwork. Estimates of time spent on non-counseling/guidance duties were also higher at the middle and high school campuses than for the other types of campuses visited.

***How were other school and district staff, parents, and community members involved with counseling and guidance programs?***

Interviewees at 14 campuses noted some district support of and involvement in the campus counseling and guidance program. Forms of involvement included establishing missions, timelines, guidelines, needs assessments, strategic planning, and budget allocations; involvement in school-to-school or grade-level transitions; guidance curriculum for all grade levels; resource materials; a district counselor resource center; social workers, psychologists, and other support staff; seeking grant-funded counselor positions; and college application and financial aid resource staff to help students and parents.

When resources within or in nearby communities were available, at least some community involvement was reported in campus counseling and guidance programs. As expected, community resources were more often used at campuses located in larger communities, where more resources are generally available. Most frequently, off-campus involvement focused on community members and agencies providing further counseling and social services for students and/or their parents who are referred by school counselors. Among agencies and community members providing further services were Protective and Regulatory Services, Department of Human Services, local runaway or homeless shelters, Alcoholics Anonymous, legal aid groups, Planned Parenthood, United Way agencies, psychologists, psychiatrists, community clinics, local programs for students at risk for dropping out, programs for pregnant teens, programs for chemically dependent individuals, resources for dependents of local military personnel, and hospitals. On-campus involvement included volunteers from the community participating in mentoring programs; participating as speakers for career days or career awareness activities, for drug and alcohol awareness programs, and for parent advisory meetings; and participating as sponsors for students in scholarship programs and as donors to help fund the purchase of incentives for students and other materials. A Communities-in-Schools program was mentioned at two schools. Often reported at high schools was program support from local universities and colleges in dual credit programs, General Educational Development (GED) testing programs, provision of speakers, and support with student college applications and financial aid. Because of the ever-increasing plethora of student needs, counselors reported needing to spend an increasingly

larger percentage of time finding outside resources to meet students' needs than they had in the past.

Only one campus reported strong parental involvement in the counseling and guidance program. With very few exceptions, interviewees considered parental involvement in counseling and guidance programs to be inadequate; all participants felt that truly successful programs must have strong parental involvement. Approaches for involving parents included monthly parent support groups, counseling and guidance advisory committees, mentoring program participation, parents as speakers, invitations to schoolwide programs and lunch at school, contacting parents at registration, volunteer service in the counseling and guidance office, calling parents to report progress or possible student failures/discipline problems, seeing parents in school or home visits, answering parents' questions over the phone, school open houses, parent orientations, career and college nights, PTA meetings, needs assessments, and referral to community resources or services. Most parental involvement focuses on meeting students' and parents' needs rather than parents helping deliver counseling and guidance services.

While nearly all counselors across 20 campuses reported strong principal and teacher support of counselors and counseling and guidance programs, program services were almost always delivered by counselors. At several campuses, principals and/or teachers handled test administration to relieve counselors of these duties. However, counselors handled test administration and scheduling duties at most high schools studied. Most of the reported teacher involvement in the program centered around frequent formal or informal contacts with teachers by counselors to assess changing student needs and teacher needs for counselor help with guidance materials or classroom guidance lessons and to meet with teachers and parents together. On a few campuses counselors conducted informal or formal teacher and other school staff training in areas such as stress management and dealing with cultural differences.

In sum, *counselors were responsible for the delivery of counseling and guidance services*, as described throughout this report. Even when there were paid clerical or other support staff and/or volunteers, counselors conducted the programs offered in almost all cases. While clerical assistance was of some help, all counselors reported still having to do a great deal

of clerical and administrative work themselves because of the volume of work accompanying tasks such as test administration, class scheduling, student registration, and special programs such as special education programs.

### ***Was evaluation used for program improvement?***

Across schools in the study, whenever some form of evaluation was used to inform or improve design and organization, counselors were said to handle non-guidance and counseling duties less often. When professional duties were more clearly defined and some formal follow-up for evaluating success in meeting program objectives had been established, counselors were less likely to be “pulled in all directions at once.” Across the board, counselors interviewed stated that it was very important that they follow up with students to assess program efforts so that quality and quantity of student services can be improved. Whenever a formal evaluation process of assessing needs, setting program objectives, measuring success, and evaluation-based program revision was in place, beneficial strides toward program improvement and student success were reported.

## **Program Access/Results**

### ***How did students access counseling and guidance services?***

Across the 20 schools with counselors, all students had access to counseling and guidance services through self-referral or referral by counselors, teachers, school staff, and parents. Except for prekindergarten students at one campus, all students at the elementary schools received classroom guidance lessons. In addition, they received services, as referred, for either group or individual counseling and through participation in mentoring programs and schoolwide programs such as drug prevention awareness, conflict mediation, guest speakers, career awareness activities, TAAS preparation, and after-school and Saturday programs. All middle and high schools visited offered individual counseling, while half offered classroom guidance, usually addressing career awareness or test-taking skills, and group counseling sessions on topics such as emotional disturbance, disruptiveness, and low self-esteem. Centers housing VCRs, computers, or other materials were available in many of the middle and high schools for students to use for obtaining information about careers and postsecondary education and for self-help.

At three middle schools and three elementary schools, students who are failing are identified each six weeks for follow-up with services. Students also have access to services through registration, scheduling, and across-grade transition activities. Across all schools, counselors reported frequent informal and formal contact with teachers to monitor and follow up on students’ needs for services. In the words of one principal, teachers are the school’s “first line [for] counseling and guidance.”

### ***What student needs were not being sufficiently addressed and which students were not being sufficiently served by counseling and guidance programs?***

Student and adult interviewees most often mentioned that average achieving students were less likely to be sufficiently served by counseling and guidance programs than were low and high achieving students. While students in special programs are usually targeted for counseling and guidance program services, interviewees often deemed these students to be underserved because their needs are so great. Students who do not seek services but need services were mentioned as another underserved group. At middle schools, counselors wanted to better address students’ career awareness needs.

Students, counselors, teachers, and parents interviewed at middle schools and high schools felt more counseling and guidance time should be devoted to students with personal needs. Across all schools, students and adults mentioned students with personal needs needing more counseling and guidance services — for example, those with substance abuse problems, those from divorced families, those from homes where languages other than English are spoken, those with low self-esteem, and those who are prejudiced. Some students and adults interviewed thought that increasing the number of minority, Spanish speaking, and male counselors would help students feel more comfortable with receiving services. The bottom line was that all interviewees favored (a) having counseling and guidance services for all students, (b) having counselors readily available, (c) meeting the counseling needs of all students regardless of types of needs, and (d) having counselors with time available for outreach activities to reticent students.

### ***How did the perceived emphasis on meeting students' academic, personal, and career needs vary across campuses?***

Overall, a general sentiment among focus group interviewees was that students' academic and personal needs are intertwined. Most agreed that if students had unmet personal needs academic success could be hindered. As one counselor said, "If the personal is okay, the rest follows in place."

At all six elementary campuses, interviewees agreed that students' career needs were least addressed but felt that was appropriate for these grade levels. At five of the six elementary campuses, most adult interviewees thought students' personal needs were most addressed, followed by academic needs. At the sixth elementary campus, both principal and counselor saw academic needs being addressed most, followed by personal needs, but other adults in the group saw academic and personal needs being equally important.

At the six middle/junior high schools, interviewees agreed that counseling and guidance programs addressed students' career needs the least, but several felt all three areas of students' needs—academic, personal, and career—are intertwined and that all three were addressed. At most of these campuses, most emphasis was placed on meeting personal and academic needs, but all interviewees in these groups preferred seeing more time devoted to needs in all three areas. Several adults interviewed also felt more emphasis on career was needed for eighth grade students.

Interviewees at the six high schools thought areas most addressed were students' academic needs and/or both academic and career needs, whereas personal needs were least addressed. Overall, they felt personal needs should be better addressed for all three areas to receive good counseling and guidance coverage.

At the campus with no counselor, the principal reported students' academic needs to be most important, while other staff interviewed felt students' personal needs had highest priority. At the special education campus, interviewees agreed that serving students' academic and personal needs was equally important but, for these students, academic needs were also personal development needs. At the Grade 7-12 campus, staff saw career needs receiving the greatest emphasis in the counseling and guidance program but noted that personal needs were being met because the school is in a small community. Parents interviewed

at this campus viewed all three—academic, personal, and career needs—with equal importance.

### **Interviewees' Ideas about Comprehensive Programs**

#### ***How did participants define a comprehensive counseling and guidance program, and what support is needed for successful implementation?***

This section summarizes interviewees' definitions of a comprehensive counseling and guidance program and what is needed to maximize program success in meeting the diverse needs of all students. This summary synthesizes participants' ideas about comprehensive programs organized by the dimensions and relevant program areas in Table 2, presented earlier in this chapter.

**Planned and designed program based on needs assessment, priorities, and prevention.** The mission of the counseling and guidance program should be student-centered, focused on student goal attainment. The program designed to accomplish this mission must have clear goals and objectives, with priorities spelled out. The goals should be based on formal and informal needs assessments of students, school staff, and parents. The counseling and guidance program should be focused, ideally, on preventive activities, such as guidance curriculum, while remaining responsive to crises when they occur. The program definition should stress that the counseling and guidance program includes not only counselors, but also all school staff, parents, and the community. To be effective and comprehensive, a counseling and guidance program must address the whole student and his or her needs, dealing with the problems of today's students, such as violence, dysfunctional families, lack of parental support, substance abuse, sexual abuse, academic failure, student loss of or lack of direction, and poverty. It also is essential to plan for the future increase in demand for counseling and guidance services.

**Program design must include support.** There must be an adequate student-to-counselor ratio, sufficient support staff to relieve counselors of clerical and administrative duties, and all needed resources such as equipment, software, curriculum materials, and funds for counselors to attend counselor-specific staff development. Time must be built into the counseling and guidance program to support activities related to the following groups:

- **Parents** — training and support, outreach to parents who may be reluctant, and information sharing;
- **Teachers** — both formal and informal meetings for following up on student progress, provision of teacher-requested training or materials, and planning for classroom guidance lessons;
- **Counselors** — staff development specific to counselors' needs and focused on meeting the needs of today's students; and
- **Students** — outreach to reticent students and following up with students who receive counseling to ensure their needs are met.

To optimize effectiveness, a comprehensive counseling and guidance program should be in place at all campuses in a district, giving continuity of service to students changing schools and moving from elementary to middle to high school. Because crises occurring in students' lives and in schools have increased and in all likelihood will continue to increase, consistent support must be available for counselors to deal with these crises, with as minimal disruption as possible in scheduled program activities. An adequate student-to-counselor ratio and sufficient support staff are essential elements for implementing a comprehensive, preventive counseling and guidance program. The counseling and guidance program design should also include links to other available community services to enhance crisis management capacity.

**Program design must include a strong counselor professional identity.** What the roles and responsibilities of counselors *are* and *are not* should be delineated, with non-guidance/counseling duties eliminated, according to study participants. This professional identity includes counselors and the counseling and guidance program being considered essential to a successful education process. Essential to this are empowered counselors who request what they need and do not feel compelled to work extra hours in the attempt to meet everyone's needs. Counselors should be paid commensurate with their professional roles and responsibilities.

**All school staff and the community.** All stakeholders (school, district, and Education Service Center staff; students; parents; and community members) should be educated about their roles and responsibilities as part of a comprehensive counseling and guidance program. This education includes communicating what the roles and responsibilities of counselors are and are not and allowing more realistic expectations of counselors to

be established. Campus, district, and state policy makers need to be fully informed about the benefits of a developmental, preventive, comprehensive counseling and guidance program so they may see it as an essential long-term investment in the future of children. Adequate funding and a more formal recognition of the contribution of counselors and counseling and guidance programs are imperative as well. Because of the increased and more serious needs of students and their families, there must be a strong network of support for the counseling and guidance program to best meet these needs. This should include (a) strong community involvement in terms of services offered, (b) an integrated system of student services so referrals can be both efficient and effective, (c) an increased number of parent and community volunteers as mentors for students who need positive adult role models, and (d) community resources that offer preventive programs including training for parents. The Education Service Centers (ESCs) should support the program by educating the public about counseling and guidance programs, their importance, the TEA Comprehensive Model, and how the public can contribute. Based on local counselor input, ESCs should offer counselor-specific staff development and serve as a resource for counselors on up-to-date guidance curriculum materials. Teamwork and clear communication among all stakeholders were identified as key elements of a successful, comprehensive program.

**Group guidance and counseling.** Group sessions should be focused on clearly identified student needs based on formal and informal needs assessments. Programs should continue to provide individual counseling when it is in the student's best interest. In addition to being responsive to student needs, group sessions should include proactive (preventive) guidance activities.

**Emphasis on program.** Counseling and guidance should be provided through a comprehensive, designed program in which counselors, other staff (school, district, and ESC staff), parents, and community members are involved. It should no longer be conceived as only the services that counselors provide.

**Developmental curriculum.** There should be a developmental guidance curriculum in place, both age-appropriate and set up to best address student needs at the local campus. There should be a clear plan and schedule for classroom guidance activities involving both counselors and teachers. Particularly at the

middle and high school levels, guidance activities should go beyond information dissemination only.

**Focus on student goal attainment.** The focus of the program should be helping students reach identified goals such as academic success, positive changes in attitude and self image, and good interpersonal relationships, not on counselors completing clerical and administrative tasks such as student registration, class scheduling, and test administration.

**Ongoing evaluation with improvement based on evaluation results.** There should be objectives based on the counseling and guidance mission goals that are evaluated yearly and updated or modified based on needs assessments and evaluation findings.

**Consistent service to all students.** The counseling and guidance program should serve all students and meet the diversity of individual needs. Lessons and materials should reflect the cultural diversity of all students and should be appropriate for the age level being served. More minorities, males, and Spanish speakers need to be recruited as counselors and as student mentors. Programs should address the needs of all students and not just address specially identified needs limited to groups such as college-bound students or students receiving special education services.

**Bottom line.** To be truly effective, *all* the above elements must be included. Especially important are adequate resources; clear roles and responsibilities; professional recognition for counselors; keeping non-guidance duties to a minimum; realistic expectations by all stakeholders; a strong preventive focus; and commitment to and participation in programs that serve students effectively by campus, district, and state decision makers, community members, and all other stakeholders.

### **What was the perceived role of the TEA Comprehensive Model?**

Nearly all participants were very positive about the TEA Comprehensive Model because they felt it did provide clear and strong directives toward a preventive, comprehensive, and developmental counseling and guidance program, including a clear professional identity for the counselor. The large majority of interviewees would welcome the statewide adoption of the model if the support and clear definitions listed above were included. Most counselors in this study were using the TEA Comprehensive Model as a guide

in moving to a more comprehensive program. When the TEA Comprehensive Model had been in place for a few years, counselors at elementary campuses reported strong benefits. At middle and high schools, counselors listed more difficulties associated with efforts to implement the TEA Comprehensive Model, perhaps because counselor roles and duties have had a much longer historical tradition at these grade levels, predating development of the TEA (1990) model and guide.

## CHAPTER 2

# Case Study Objectives and Methodology

### Objectives

As detailed in Chapter 1, there is continuing interest in what public school students are receiving from counseling and guidance programs. The main purpose for conducting the case studies was to gather data from a diverse set of campuses to help describe commonalities and variations in current practices and what counselors, principals, teachers, school staff, students, parents, and community members prefer those practices to be. Second, case study interview data were used to understand program goals and objectives in relationship to student needs such as academic, career, and personal/social needs and to program needs such as resources, budget, staffing, and staff development needs. Third, case study interviewees were asked to gauge the sufficiency of counseling and guidance in an effort to better define a professional identity for the school counselor in relationship to teachers, school staff, and others that better addresses student needs. In addition, case study interviewees were asked to examine the policy implications of enhancing the organization of counseling and guidance program service delivery.

Chapters 3-6 begin with grade-level group summaries of case study data, followed by individual case study summaries. These chapters cover campuses by types of grade levels served. The grade-level group summaries are based on data from all 21 schools in the study. Individual case study summaries include: four of the six elementary schools in Chapter 3, two of six middle/junior high schools in Chapter 4, three of six high schools in Chapter 5, and all three multilevel schools in Chapter 6.

Both the grade-level group summaries and the case studies in Chapters 3-6 are organized into four major sections to more closely follow the interview protocol sequence. The first section describes the background

characteristics of the campuses such as district type, grade levels served, and number of counselors. For each case study, this section details the interview sources and any difficulties that occurred in data collection. The second section presents interviewees' descriptions of campus counseling and guidance programs at their schools. Areas included are the goals and expectations for the program; a description of program implementation including activities conducted, professional identity of the counselor, needs assessments, and resources (student-to-counselor ratio, staffing, and budget); and district, parent, and community involvement in the counseling and guidance program. The third section presents study participant perceptions about needed changes in counseling and guidance services offered. Also presented are their perceptions about changes in society; ideal student-to-counselor ratios; ideal allocations of resources; descriptions of non-counseling/-guidance duties; emphasis on meeting students' academic, personal, and career needs; how counseling and guidance services are (and ideally) allocated according to components of the TEA Comprehensive Model; need for more preventive programs; desired changes in district, parent, and community involvement; and student perceptions of counseling and guidance programs in their schools. The fourth section presents interviewee descriptions of successful counseling and guidance program characteristics and how they feel policy makers can help create ideal counseling and guidance programs.

### Sampling Plan

All 1,046 districts in Texas were surveyed in May 1994 about participation in this study. Of those districts agreeing to participate, 21 were selected for the case studies. Of these 21, one district without a counselor was chosen to explore how students' counseling and guidance needs are currently met and

what school staff would expect a counselor to do if the school had one on staff. Campuses selected within the districts were chosen to represent the diversity in schools and student populations served.

Using 1993-94 data from the agency's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), districts were selected in the summer of 1994 based on the following characteristics.

- **Geographic Location** — Districts were located in 14 of the 20 Education Service Center (ESC) regions.
- **Type of District** — Districts were located in various types of communities.

<u>Number of Districts</u>	<u>District Type</u>
4	Major Urban
4	Major Suburban
5	Other Central City
3	Independent Town
3	Non-Metropolitan
2	Rural

- **Student Enrollment** — There was variation in the student enrollments of each district.

<u>Number of Districts</u>	<u>Number of Students Enrolled</u>
4	Over 50,000
5	25,000 to 49,999
5	10,000 to 24,999
4	1,000 to 9,999
3	Less than 999

- **Ethnic Diversity of Students** — As Texas' population becomes more ethnically diverse, so does its students. Districts were chosen to reflect this diversity, but this is best illustrated in the campus characteristics presented in Table 3.
- **Economically Disadvantaged** — Districts also varied in the percentages of economically disadvantaged students, as shown in Table 3.

Each campus within the 21 districts was selected to vary on different, as well as some of the same, characteristics as districts. Characteristics used to select these campuses are given below.

- **Grade Span** — Equal numbers of elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools were selected. In addition, three campuses were chosen because they served more grades than are usually served by elementary, middle, or high schools.

**Table 3**  
**Summary Statistics for Case Study Campuses and Texas**

<b>1993-94 Characteristics</b>	<b>21 Case Study Campuses</b>			<b>Texas</b>
	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Total</u>
Percent of Asian American Students	0%	22%	4%	2%
Percent of American Indian Students	0%	1%	<1%	<1%
Percent of African American Students	0%	63%	16%	14%
Percent of Hispanic Students	5%	100%	39%	36%
Percent of White Students	0%	95%	41%	48%
Number of Students Enrolled	40	2,900	986	3,601,839
Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students	15%	95%	50%	45%
Percent of Students Passing All TAAS Tests	29%	96%	54%	56%
Number of Counselors	0	11	3	7,558

Sources: TEA, Research and Evaluation Division analysis of PEIMS data; TEA (1995) *Snapshot '94: 1993-94 School District Profiles*.

**Note:** Statewide mean enrollment per campus was 568; 1.2 was the mean number of counselors per campus.

Campus types are presented in the list below.

<u>Number of Campuses</u>	<u>1994-95 Campus Type</u>
6	Elementary
6	Middle/Junior High
6	High School
3	Multilevel

Within these levels, schools varied in grades served. One elementary school served only prekindergarten and kindergarten students, another served prekindergarten through Grade 4, and another served students in prekindergarten through Grade 6. One multilevel school served all grade levels, another served elementary and middle school grade levels, and a third served middle and high school grade levels.

Table 3 presents the range and mean of other 1993-94 campus characteristics used to select the 21 schools for the case studies. Grade-level group and individual school data are presented in the group and individual case summaries in Chapters 3-6. For comparison purposes, the statewide summary statistics are included in Table 3.

### **Interview Protocols**

The following interview protocols were designed specifically for this study:

- Interview organization sheet and general directions for interview moderators and assistants
- Counselor and principal interview protocols and pre-interview mailings to school staff
- Adult focus group interview protocol, pre-interview mailing, and reminders for moderators
- Student focus group interview protocol, survey, pre-interview mailing, and reminders for moderators

Agency staff designed these protocols and interview plans with the assistance of Dr. Richard Krueger, Extension Leader - Program Evaluation Professor at the University of Minnesota and a nationally recognized expert on focus group interviewing techniques. Pilot testing of the interview protocols and process was conducted in December at an elementary school in the central Texas area and, as a result, a number of revisions were made. Based on further review by the contractor hired to conduct the case study interviews, Dr. Ester Smith, EGS Research & Consulting, final revisions to the protocols were made. Copies of the

protocols and other materials listed above are in the Appendix.

### **Data Collection**

Case study interviews at each of the 21 schools were conducted in March through mid-May 1995 by Dr. Ester Smith, EGS Research & Consulting, under contract with TEA. A TEA staff member also was present at each interview to tape record the interviews and take notes. Each participant consented to audio-tape recording, and each person was assured that no individual names, schools, or districts would be identified in any resulting reports or presentations.

Prior to the case study interviews, letters were sent to district and/or school contact persons about various details important in preparing for the visits. Selection of students and adult focus group participants was left up to the principal's discretion, although specific guidelines were provided about preferred representation. Selecting a diversity of students in the school, as well as of school staff and community members, was encouraged. Also, if more than one counselor was on staff at a campus, the principal selected the counselor to be interviewed individually, except as noted in the second paragraph below. The principal and/or counselor usually selected the participants and informed them about expectations, schedule, and location; forwarded preliminary materials to the participants (except for the students); and arranged the time and location for the interviews.

Interviews were conducted in a variety of locations, depending on school facilities. Generally, principal interviews were conducted in the principal's office or the conference room used for group interviews. Counselor interviews, as well as adult and student focus group interviews, were held in counselors' offices, the library, or the conference room.

On one campus, the counselor interview was conducted with all five counselors at the school's request. All interviews were conducted in English, although in several instances individuals in the group translated for other members of the group. At two campuses, student focus group interviews were not conducted because of the prekindergarten and kindergarten ages of students (one campus) or because of the nature of disabilities of the students (the other campus). At another campus, no adult focus group interview was conducted because of scheduling difficulties.

## Data Synthesis and Report Preparation

After the interviews were completed, 76 audiotape recordings of the individual and focus group interviews, each 1-2 hours in length, were transcribed over a 17-week period. The transcriptions were coded using a coding schema developed by TEA staff to identify the key areas to be covered in the individual case and grade-level group summaries. The coded transcriptions and notes were then used to compile the case study and group summary descriptions in Chapters 3-6. In each case, the views of the interview participants are presented with minimal interpretations or opinions of TEA staff. Any opinions, judgments, and perceptions made by the participants are attributed to the source's role group (e.g., school counselor, principal, student, parent, etc.). As much as possible, comments from each group or individual are presented in areas covered by the four interviews. In analysis of these data, no judgments were included regarding what may or may not be appropriate practices at this point in the process.

Because case study interviewees were assured they would not be identified in any subsequent presentation or report, references to identifying information such as

specifically-named programs, persons, districts, schools, or cities have not been included. Each case study school was arbitrarily assigned a number, and the schools are presented by number in Chapters 3-6. The numbering does not reflect which set of interviews was conducted first or last.

Chapter 1 summarizes overall trends and patterns in current counseling and guidance programs and practices as described by interviewees across the 21 schools, including interviewees' perceptions of ideal counseling and guidance programs. The final section of Chapter 1 provides a brief synthesis of interviewees' policy concerns and suggestions. Although the 21 case study schools do represent a diversity of characteristics, they do not represent the entire range of characteristics existing in public school counseling and guidance programs statewide. Thus, findings cannot be generalized statistically to all programs across the state. However, these descriptions can be useful to local-, regional-, and state-level policy makers and staff in considering policy and implementation issues and future directions related to Texas' public school counseling and guidance programs.

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## CHAPTER 3

# Elementary School Case Studies

## Summary

### Characteristics of Campuses Selected

Each of the six elementary campuses in the study had at least a part-time counselor. One of the elementary campuses served the early education through kindergarten grades and another served Grades 3-5. The remaining four served a wider range of elementary grades. The six campuses were located in central cities, suburbs, towns, and non-metropolitan areas, with the majority located in districts with lower than average district wealth. Of the five campuses rated, all were rated *Acceptable* under the 1995 state accountability system. On five of the six campuses, a majority of the students were economically disadvantaged. The ethnic composition of students varied from 0 percent to 48 percent African American; 21 percent to 99 percent Hispanic; 1 percent to 55 percent White; and 0 percent to 21 percent other minorities. The following summary provides an overview of the six elementary campuses. This chapter also includes case-study reports for four of the campuses.

### Elementary School Counseling and Guidance Programs

#### Goals and Expectations

Four of the six elementary campuses had written districtwide counseling and guidance missions and a fifth was working on a campus counseling and guidance mission. Both the verbal and written missions focused on preparing students to be successful adults by providing services that address students' emotional, social, academic, career, and personal needs. Generally interviewees felt that by reaching students early in school with developmental guidance there would be less crisis intervention needed later. Because the campuses were using or creating counseling and guidance programs based on the TEA Comprehensive Model, counselors reported that following the expecta-

tions of the model was a primary goal. When there were districtwide programs, curriculum, guidelines, and timelines in place, counselors reported that these guidelines formed the primary expectations they followed. Interviewees perceived mixed expectations for elementary counselors from parents and communities. Several participants reported that often community members are not aware there is an elementary counseling and guidance program, so they do not have expectations. Other interviewees indicated that some parents and community members have very high expectations of the counselor and the counseling and guidance program to provide both preventive and responsive services; to be a shoulder for students and their families to lean on; to find resources for students and their families; to train responsible citizens; to be available to help whenever needed; and, in some cases, to solve all the student's and family's problems.

#### Campus Implementation

Although there was variation at each of the six campuses, the counseling and guidance program consisted of three core areas: classroom guidance lessons; group counseling sessions; and individual counseling sessions. The topics included in the weekly or bi-weekly classroom guidance lessons ranged across areas such as building students' self-esteem; study, coping, and social skills; respect for others; and appropriate behavior. For the younger students, counselors often reported using art, clay, dramatic play, or puppet shows as teaching tools and using art or play therapy as ways for students to express themselves. Group counseling sessions were formed around the similar needs that students brought to school. The range of weekly groups offered was similar across campuses and included groups for students who had experienced death; who were from divorced families or were from dysfunctional families; suffered from attention deficit disorder; could not follow school routines or needed study skills; were

new to school or would be transitioning to a new school; had low self-esteem; and had been emotionally, physically, or sexually abused. All counselors reported adding new groups as students with similar needs were identified. Counselors on all six elementary campuses reported providing some individual counseling sessions. Students were referred by teachers, administrators, parents, students themselves, or identified by the counselor. When more serious counseling needs are identified, all six counselors reported referring students and/or their families to outside agencies for more extensive counseling services than the school could provide.

All six counselors also reported conducting one or more parental involvement activity. These commonly included conducting or arranging parenting skills programs for parents; holding monthly or bimonthly parent meetings or support groups, where often the counselors arranged for outside speakers to address issues of concern to parents; participating in school open houses; and visiting with parents via phone, at school, or in home visits. All counselors reported spending considerable time finding appropriate community resources to help students and their families with a wide variety of needs, including counseling and social services. Counselors also managed adult mentoring, peer tutoring, and cross-age tutoring programs. All counselors reported 'some' to 'considerable' involvement with schoolwide programs such as drug and alcohol prevention programs, career days or fairs, student recognitions, student rallies, and "being kind to others" week.

The participating elementary counselors all reported doing their own paperwork and having to work extra hours to complete clerical tasks. All reported consulting both formally and informally with teachers. At the five campuses where students were tested, all counselors reported some involvement with the testing program or test scores, but three counselors indicated they did not administer the tests or complete the accompanying paperwork. All counselors reported being involved in one or more campuswide planning groups, such as the campus improvement team, the student/teacher assistance team, the student assessment committee, and/or the counseling and guidance advisory committee. At campuses with districtwide counseling and guidance programs, or where a districtwide program was being developed, the counselors attended districtwide counselor meetings. Each counselor also reported spending time preparing curriculum materials, and most reported coordinating

the transition activities for students going to middle school and their parents.

According to student and adult participants across campuses, the counselor is considered an essential part of the school team. All six counselors and their principals felt that the TEA Comprehensive Model is a good basis for a counseling and guidance program and one that increases the professional identity of the counselor and defines what counselors' roles and responsibilities should be. Most counselors felt they did more than the model specified and/or needed additional resources to implement the model fully. All these counselors felt that non-counseling/guidance duties should be clearly listed and that there should be no expectation that counselors perform these duties.

All six counselors used the referrals for counseling and guidance services and their frequent informal contacts with teachers as ways to assess student needs. In addition, there were a variety of other techniques used by one or more counselors: conducting written assessments or surveys of teacher, administrator, and parent perceptions of students' needs, either at the district or local level; reviewing student grades every six weeks and contacting parents of students with poor grades to find out what services were needed; one-to-one consultations with teachers about students; attending grade-level meetings; and using the counseling and guidance advisory committee as a needs assessment platform.

No clerical assistance was assigned directly to the counseling and guidance program at any of these six campuses. Although principals indicated counselors had access to the school secretary, counselors typically did not use these staff. Three of the six counselors had personal computers (PCs) in their offices, while three did not but had access to PCs elsewhere in school. Two counselors did not have telephones in their offices, but had access to one in the school building. Three counselors reported having a good supply of curriculum materials and were satisfied with their budgets in this area. Three counselors felt their budgets were not adequate. All principals reported supplementing the counseling and guidance budget with other funds because they saw counseling and guidance as a high priority. One of the six campuses had only a part-time counselor who was on campus one day a week to serve 565 students. The other five elementary campuses had at least one full-time counselor each, and the number of students served per counselor, according to Public Education Information

Management System (PEIMS), ranged from 334 to 732. Two campuses had either an additional half-time or full-time counselor. The counselors interviewed at these campuses reported their ratios were somewhat misleading in that the full-time counselor position was currently vacant, and the half-time position was not filled until the late spring of the 1994-95 school year.

At four of the six campuses there was strong district involvement in the counseling and guidance program. These districts had or were developing districtwide written missions, goals, and timelines, and a guidance curriculum (prekindergarten through Grade 12). One other campus in a very small district reported no district involvement. The remaining district was becoming more involved by examining the TEA Comprehensive Model and planning a more cohesive districtwide program. In half of the districts, districtwide social workers were available for counselors to refer students in need. One district had a school psychologist and another had obtained a grant and opened a district health clinic where students in need could be referred. Other activities conducted at the district level included maintaining a districtwide library of materials and videos, preparing campus counseling and guidance budgets, and seeking grant-funded counselor positions for the district. At least one Education Service Center (ESC) also provided training, consultation, and a library of counseling and guidance materials.

The majority of campuses reported low parental involvement even though a variety of parental involvement activities were held, such as parent meetings and forums, parent invitations to schoolwide programs, and parent participation through the needs assessment process. One campus reported strong parental involvement in the counseling and guidance advisory committee, attendance at schoolwide programs and parent meetings, mentoring and career awareness activities, and a very supportive Parent Teacher Association (PTA) that funded some counseling and guidance activities. At all six elementary schools, participants wanted to increase or keep parental involvement at a high level. All counselors reported one or more ways the community was providing support to the counseling and guidance program. Counselors referred students and their parents to outside agencies or resources in the community when the counselor or counseling and guidance program could not meet their needs. Community members, especially police officers, volunteered as mentors for students and speakers for career day or

other programs such as alcohol and drug abuse prevention. Most counselors received some financial donations from the community to fund special programs or projects.

## **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

Student needs were seen by these elementary counselors as much greater now, more immediate, and often more serious and complex. Students are facing problems and the stresses they create at an early age. Key problems mentioned were an increase in dysfunctional families, poverty, families with alcohol and drug abuse problems, and students suffering from sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse. As a result, the roles and responsibilities of the counselor are increasing, often without any increases in resources. The increased problems have led these counselors to spend more time seeking outside agencies to refer families to when there are needs that the school cannot meet by itself. All counselors reported a great increase in social services needed.

Except for the campus with the part-time counselor, participants reported that generally all students on their campuses were being served. However, they also identified groups they saw as needing more attention, such as high-achieving students, average students, students at risk, emotionally disturbed students, and non-English speaking students. Students interviewed reported they would like the counselor more available to them, both by being in the classroom more often to teach guidance lessons, as well as by being available in the counselor's office.

At the campus with a part-time counselor, participants wanted at least one full-time counselor and ideally another full-time counselor as well. Participants at the other campuses saw a strong need for additional counselors, as well as clerical help assigned specifically to the counseling and guidance program. The additional counselor could provide more classroom guidance and make a counselor more available to students for both individual and group counseling. Other types of personnel support needed include social workers and a parent facilitator. Several participants expressed the need for the additional counselor to speak Spanish; preference for a male counselor also was mentioned. In addition to adding professional and

support staff, most counselors felt budget increases were needed for the purchase of more curriculum and support materials, staff development training, speakers, and student incentives. Counselors without computers or telephones in their offices wanted these items.

The primary non-guidance duty mentioned at all six campuses was the counselors processing all their own paperwork, including reports, memos, and materials preparation. Several counselors mentioned that, although they were counseling and guidance duties, crises that demanded their immediate attention often disrupted their classroom guidance schedule and/or their scheduled time to see students individually or in groups.

Four of the six counselors and/or their principals would like to see the ESC serve as a much stronger resource for counselors and counseling and guidance programs. The areas mentioned for improvement include offering professional staff development training designed specifically for counselors; communicating more often and better with counselors about the services they offer and the materials they provide and gathering counselors' input before training is planned; serving as a resource on guidance curriculum by having various curricula materials for counselors to examine; and offering recommendations about which materials are age-appropriate. Participants offered a variety of suggestions for increased district support for campus counseling and guidance programs. These included adopting a guidance curriculum, systematizing student transitions districtwide, and adding social workers; training school board members about elementary counseling and guidance programs and their importance; funding campus parent facilitators to work with parents and the community and conduct more community education about elementary counseling and guidance programs; funding assistant principals for elementary schools and clerical help for counseling and guidance programs; adding more elementary counselors; and providing counselors with training about the legal and testing issues that all counselors now must manage.

Most participants across the campuses wanted to increase parent involvement and identified various ways that parental involvement could be increased, such as offering parenting classes, making more contacts with parents whose children are being seen by the counselor, and having more parents volunteer as mentors or to help in the counseling and guidance

office. Many of the parents felt that the counselor and school were doing their parts and that the parents needed to do their part. School staff and parents expressed that the school can offer opportunities, but the parents are the ones who choose to participate or not. A number of participants felt that some parents expect the school counselor to solve all their problems. All agreed that strong parent involvement was essential to a successful counseling and guidance program. It also was suggested that parents could encourage more community involvement with the counseling and guidance program. At all six elementary campuses, interviewees liked the idea of having community resources coordination where various community services for youth and their parents could be accessed in one location. This would reduce time spent by counselors locating resources to help students or their families. Also mentioned at several campuses was the need for more community members serving as mentors (especially African American and Hispanic males); speaking to students about careers; attending school functions and getting more involved in the school as a whole; serving as positive role models for students; and offering positive programs that involve students and their families, such as athletic leagues.

At all six elementary campuses, interviewees agreed that students' career needs were addressed the least, and it was felt that this was appropriate for these grade levels. Nearly all participants saw personal needs most addressed by the counseling and guidance program with academics being addressed next. At one campus both students' academic and personal needs were seen as equally important. When asked to describe their campus program in terms of the four components of the TEA Comprehensive Model, interviewees indicated that currently guidance curriculum and responsive services received the highest percentages of the counselors' time. Most participants felt these two areas were the most important areas to address for elementary students. Generally, what they would ideally like was similar to what they were currently offering, participants reported.

Interviewees at all six campuses strongly agreed that a successful counseling and guidance program should have a stronger focus on prevention rather than intervention, and the foci of their programs currently were between 60 to 90 percent prevention activities. At campuses where the TEA Comprehensive Model was used as the basis for the counseling and guidance program, the interviewees felt that the model had made the program more proactive, preventive, com-

prehensive, and student-centered. Counselors at two campuses where the model had been in place for three or more years reported that they had seen positive results from the prevention activities, including decreased teacher referrals to the counselor and improved student behaviors and attitudes. Participants agreed if prevention activities were done at the elementary level, there would be less need for intervention at the middle and high school levels.

## **Policy Concerns**

### **Areas for Policy Attention**

Participants from the six elementary campuses support adoption of the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC, and adoption of the requirements for TEA-funded counselors for all counselors if there is adequate funding and some flexibility to meet local campus and student needs. These models help define the counselor's roles and responsibilities, a concern raised repeatedly on the elementary campuses. Related to wanting clearly defined roles, counselors emphasized the importance of strengthening the professional identity of the counselor, primarily by eliminating non-counseling/guidance duties.

Interviewees stressed the importance of adequate funding, including clerical support so counseling and guidance programs can be both effective and preventive. Because of the increasing problems faced by today's youth, participants see a need for more elementary school counselors to better meet students' needs. Informing local school boards, parents, and the public about the need for and benefits of strong elementary counseling and guidance programs also was considered important. There also is a need for greater parental and community involvement in counseling and guidance programs. Counselors requested training that was specific to counselors' needs, which could be provided through the ESCs.

### **Characteristics of Successful Programs**

Elementary school participants saw a number of essential components for a successful program, including a focus on prevention activities (which are age appropriate with a strong curriculum) and early intervention when problems arise. An adequate student-to-counselor ratio is needed so all students' needs can be met. The counselor always should be available to students, know all students, and be known by all students. Each of the four areas of the TEA Comprehensive Model (guidance curriculum, respon-

sive services, individual planning, and system support) would be addressed. A successful program would have positive student outcomes such as improved test scores and grades, improved attendance, fewer discipline problems, decreased violence, improved self-esteem, and more motivated students. Elementary staff also identified a number of characteristics of successful counseling and guidance programs related to parents. These included strong counselor/parent communication, counselors working directly with parents, availability of parenting classes and other programs for parents, and positive feedback from parents. Teacher reports of student improvement, improved classroom management, and incorporation of the counseling and guidance program objectives into classroom teaching also were seen as characteristics of success. A positive school climate and strong supportive and collaborative relationships among counselors, teachers, and administrators in implementing a student-centered counseling and guidance program were also identified as characteristics of a successful elementary counseling and guidance program.

# Elementary School: Campus 1

## Background

### Campus Characteristics

This campus is in a district in an independent town, with lower than average district wealth. It has over 550 students. All district early education, prekindergarten, and kindergarten students attend this school. Except for two full-day kindergarten classes, each prekindergarten and kindergarten teacher has two half-day classes. Under the 1995 state accountability system, this campus was not rated due to the early grade levels served. Table 1.1 summarizes some characteristics of students, teachers, and counselors.

### Interview Sources

All three adult interviews were conducted (counselor, principal, and adult focus group). The student focus group was not conducted due to the age of students. The adult focus group consisted of the principal, counselor, four parents, and four teachers.

## Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

### Development and History on Campus

There is currently one counselor who is assigned to this campus one day a week and to another elementary campus four days a week. Last year the counselor

prepared a proposal to the district requesting a full time counselor for 1994-95. This was not funded. The principal submitted another proposal for 1995-96 requesting a counselor for four days a week. At the time of these interviews no decision had been made.

In 1993-94, the counselor specified that she visited all classes, both prekindergarten and kindergarten, in school. She found this ineffective because it was so long between visits students did not remember her name or what they had talked about when she was last there, thus limiting the effectiveness of the preventive efforts. Due to this, the counselor and principal changed the focus of services in 1994-95. Except for special guest speaker presentations, the counselor no longer conducts guidance lessons in prekindergarten classes. She conducts guidance lessons in kindergarten classes and visits each kindergarten class once every two weeks. Because of time limitations, the counselor and principal preferred to focus on kindergarten because these students go to another school at the end of the school year, while the prekindergarten students will be on the campus next year. However, responsive services, as well as referrals to outside agencies, are offered to both grade levels.

During the school year when site visits were conducted, counselors were meeting weekly to develop a districtwide counseling and guidance program, according to the counselor. They developed a written mission, and they were developing curriculum materials.

**Table 1.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #1**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	43%	11%	Number of Counselor Positions	.2
Hispanic	26%	5%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	None
White	31%	84%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	2825:1
Other Minority	0%	0%	Number of Teachers	19
Economically Disadvantaged	87%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	15 Years
Limited English Proficient	22%	n/a		

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), 1994-95, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), and case study interview data.

## Goals and Expectations

During the spring of 1995, a copy of the district counseling and guidance mission statement was sent to all parents and schools in the district. The principal read the district's statement, "The mission is to provide comprehensive academic, social, and career guidance and counseling services to students by assisting students, parents, teachers, and administrators in preparing students to meet the demands of an internationally competitive technological marketplace."

The counselor expressed her view of the mission of the counseling and guidance program at this campus: "I think the mission would be to help children learn to adjust to a school environment, and part of learning to adjust to a school environment ... [is that] it spans over into what goes on in their home life and what they have learned prior to coming to this school. We have a lot of children that come without, or that haven't had very strong discipline, and they haven't had rules or

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*"[The] school environment . . . spans over into what goes on in their home life and what they have learned prior to coming to this school."*

—Counselor

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limits set on them, and this is their first experience in a school environment, dealing with authority and rules. That's a big part with helping the children to adjust."

Teachers and parents in the focus group added their ideas on what else the mission included. Several participants (including the counselor) saw the focus of the program being prevention and early intervention. This was seen as teaching students lessons about situations they may face at home or at school, so they will be able to handle them and be better able to learn in school. Another teacher thought that a lot of social skills were needed, since most students at this age don't have these skills or don't know how to use them. A parent felt that this gave the school "an opportunity to enhance the lives of the children." All expectations mentioned by interviewees focused on the counselor, not on the counseling and guidance program. When asked about community expectations, everyone focused on parents or families of students in school.

Both principal and counselor believed that the community expects preventive programs from the counselor, but when the family or student is having problems, they expect responsive services, too. The counselor added that most parents expect the counselor to be there when they need her. At school open houses many parents talk to her about their children and their desire for her to see their children. From her perspective, the community expects the counselor to give them advice, make referrals, know where they can get help and what resources are available outside the school, solve problems as quickly as possible, and teach classroom guidance lessons and social skills. The counselor said, "Sometimes I think they [parents] expect more from the school than from themselves. They expect the school to teach all these things to their children instead of learning how to teach them themselves." Parents in the focus group and a teacher echoed the same sentiment.

## Campus Implementation

Because of students' ages, the counselor specified using play therapy, clay therapy, dramatic play, and puppet shows. She explained that most children this age are not able to verbalize how they feel, but they can express themselves through art or clay. The majority of her time is spent conducting classroom guidance lessons. Her lessons with each kindergarten class are 25 minutes long, consisting of a 15-minute puppet show and a 10-minute activity. She believed that being in each class every other week allows her to build relationships with students so that if they have a problem, they will feel comfortable coming to her. The curriculum focuses on social skills such as interpersonal relationships, expressing feelings, identifying feelings, making friends, introducing yourself, and other elementary social skills. She also spoke of dealing with multicultural issues including similarities and differences among people.

In addition to these guidance sessions, the counselor individually counsels 12 students. She meets weekly with four students whose needs are more severe, but meets with the others less frequently due to time restrictions. The counselor mentioned conducting small group sessions when she has two or more students with the same needs, such as divorce, friendship, and death and bereavement.

On another day (not her classroom guidance day), the counselor meets weekly for two hours as part of a

teacher assistance team—including two regular education teachers, one special education teacher, and a social worker. Each member of this team has completed training on team problem solving processes. This team is used by teachers to refer students who are having problems they don't know how to solve. The counselor indicated team members discuss referred students and their needs with the teacher and make recommendations (including referrals to special education) on how best to meet students' needs.

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*“Nothing interferes with her [the counselor’s] time while she’s here.”*

—Principal

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The counselor specified performing a variety of other tasks. She prepares curriculum lessons by breaking them down into small steps, and she adapts prepared curriculum for this age level. She attends school open houses held for parents in the evenings, and she is attending parenting skills training classes so she can offer these classes to parents in the future. Memos and paperwork for this campus are prepared when the counselor works at her other campus, where she has a computer. She consults with teachers and participates in parent-teacher meetings upon request. Because she serves this campus only one day a week, she refers many children to outside agencies for family counseling through a social worker or local Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR) center.

Teachers in the focus group and the counselor concurred that kindergarten students receive a good preventive program, and students who need more help are served through individual or group sessions. The principal saw the program as meeting the needs of students from dysfunctional families. However, members of the focus group concluded that the counselor's limited time is insufficient to implement the program fully.

Parents in the focus group recognized that while teachers also act as counselors, they cannot address student needs to the extent that counselors can or to the extent that such problems need to be addressed because of lack of time and counseling training. Teachers and the principal agreed that the counselor's limited time on campus places much responsibility for counseling students and parents on teachers' shoulders. The principal emphasized that the program is

implemented by teachers through their daily contact with students to bring out students' strengths. One teacher reflected that because of limited counselor availability, the counselor is seen as “the last resort.” She also felt that if there were a full-time counselor available, teachers could be free to concentrate on academics. When the counselor is on campus, she works very closely with teachers to address needs of the whole child, according to the principal. Teachers also serve as a referral source for parents who ask teachers to refer their children to the counselor. Teachers in the group commented that the counselor had been helpful to them, but they believed that because of changing social conditions and needs of students, all teachers should take courses in counseling.

The principal and teachers expressed their support for the counselor. The principal, when asked what interfered with the counselor's duties, replied, “Nothing interferes with her [the counselor] time while she's here.” The principal felt it was not appropriate for counselors to engage in administrative or clerical activities. However, the counselor remarked that she occasionally is asked to participate in Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings, which she does not regard as one of her responsibilities.

The counselor is a recent graduate of a master's degree program based on the TEA Comprehensive Model. She is very supportive of this view of counseling and guidance, especially the focus on direct services to students, and hopes it will be adopted in her district as well as statewide. Also, the Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC) statements constitute a sound basis for evaluating counselors' performance, in her opinion. The counselor thought that currently the district did not have a consistent performance evaluation system for counselors.

According to the principal, the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC descriptions of counselors' roles and responsibilities are consistent with what is done in the school as a whole but not necessarily with what the counselor is doing, due to lack of time. Parents and teachers in the focus group also agreed that the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC descriptions of the counselor's roles and responsibilities provided for a well-rounded program, and they believed these are followed overall by the counselor, as time permits.

The counselor reported not conducting a formal, written needs assessment but consulting constantly with teachers about students' needs. According to the principal, the counselor has no assigned clerical assistance but has access to office staff as needed. The principal also commented that the counselor had not indicated a need for clerical help. The principal and counselor concurred that the counselor received the age-appropriate curriculum materials and supplies needed, including a wide range of play therapy dolls and houses, puppets, clay, and art materials. The counselor's private office has no phone or personal computer (PC). She uses the portable car phone the district provides her so parents, social workers, or staff from the other school she serves can reach her.

The counselor indicated that she applied for this position when the previous counselor retired and while working as a teacher in the district. According to the counselor, the district lost three counselors at this time and had difficulty finding qualified counselors. The principal and teachers in the focus group stressed that the previous counselor was not particularly effective with this student age, and how important it was for the counselor at this campus to have age-appropriate training (as does the current counselor). The principal mentioned that there were not many qualified applicants for the last open counselor position.

The principal described the transition from kindergarten to Grade 1 for all district kindergarten students, facilitated through an orientation at this campus. The principals and Grade 1 teachers from the elementary schools are invited by the principal to come and meet prospective students. Videos of the different elementary schools are shown to parents, and school staff arrange for parents to meet with the new principal and Grade 1 teacher. To encourage parents to attend the orientation meeting child care is provided. The principal has responsibility for these transition activities because of the counselor's limited time.

The principal mentioned there are three full-time district social workers and a school psychologist, available three days a week, for the counselor to contact for referrals to outside agencies or counselors. The principal and counselor concurred that development of a districtwide comprehensive counseling and guidance program has been the most important district involvement with this school's counseling and guidance program. The counselor acknowledged attending several workshops at the Education Service Center (ESC) that she found helpful. According to the

principal, ESC staff attended some staff development meetings on campus.

All participants agreed that there was low parent involvement in the counseling and guidance program. Parents in the group mentioned that many parents may need to work up their courage before they can talk to the counselor, or they may not want anyone to know their child has a problem.

The counselor explained that she is working with a local community coalition that is sending her to training in practical parenting education. She hopes to conduct parenting classes here if she is assigned more time at this campus. The counselor mentioned referring many students to outside community agencies, especially the local MHMR center, for family counseling. According to the principal, counseling services on a sliding fee are available from a local church. The principal added that she did most of the identifying and integrating of community resources because she was here full time and the counselor was not.

## **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

### **Areas Prompting Need for Change**

All participants stressed that their number one priority for change is increasing the counselor's time on campus. In their opinion, the quality of services currently provided is excellent, but the quantity is not. Except for occasional guest speakers, prekindergarten students do not receive guidance activities. One prekindergarten teacher in the focus group missed the positive things this year that happened for her students the previous year when the counselor came to her class. In addition, parent and teacher participants were concerned that non-English speaking students may not always get the services they need. Several parents in the focus group mentioned that parents may not know there is a counselor assigned to this campus. The counselor's continued presence at school throughout the week was seen as allowing time for both students and parents to feel comfortable with her, and therefore, more likely to seek her out. Teachers in the group mentioned their hesitancy in referring parents to the counselor due to the possible time delay in her availability.

The principal emphasized that changes in society have affected the counseling and guidance needs of students: "We've had counselors in the district a long

time, and the needs have changed, as far as meeting the needs of today's students." Today she sees many more students from dysfunctional families and emphasized that more students and their families need counseling and social services than in the past. School should meet the needs of the whole child, and counseling and guidance services are important for this. In her judgment, there are now more children who need things turned around for them; school may be the child's only safe haven. She believes counseling and guidance services need to keep up with changes occurring in society. The principal stressed that prevention and early intervention activities are essential to do this, as is a full-time counselor.

### **Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs**

All participants concurred that the current counseling and guidance program focuses most on students' personal needs. The counselor explained that she addresses career needs through dramatic play activities and guidance lessons on careers, and she teaches every child that he or she has the potential to become what-

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*"[I would] just beg for one full-time counselor."*

—Parent

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ever he or she wants to be. The counselor added that she focuses on academic needs least because of her limited time on campus and because these are the teachers' foci. The principal viewed meeting academic needs as the second priority of the counseling and guidance program, with personal needs and academics being parallel areas. From several participants' perspectives, the counselor focuses most on personal needs, but the overall focus is the whole child. If children are not doing well personally, then they will not do well academically. Interviewees stressed the primacy of addressing personal needs at this age. Teachers in the group were pleased that the whole school addressed personal needs of children. They saw this occurring through encouraging students as individuals, accepting them and giving them positive feedback, and creating a happy and risk-free environment. One parent affirmed the success of focusing on personal needs through seeing her child come home with a good attitude and feeling good about himself and what he can do. All participants

thought, under the ideal condition of having a full-time counselor, that each of these three areas could be addressed more fully in the counseling and guidance program.

### **Emphasis in Allocating Services According to Comprehensive Model Components**

The counselor reported spending most of her time teaching the guidance curriculum to kindergarten classes, while responsive services are provided through small group and individual sessions. The counselor saw her participation in systems support as being a member of the teacher assistance team and working with the districtwide counseling group. She indicated that she does not address individual planning because she feels it is not applicable to students four and five years old. She explained that she follows the TEA Comprehensive Model in conducting the counseling and guidance program as much as possible.

All focus group members agreed that the two most emphasized components of the counseling and guidance program were guidance curriculum and responsive services, followed by system support, as shown in Table 1.2. Under ideal circumstances, the counselor, principal, and teachers in the group would like to see greater emphasis on guidance curriculum and a decrease in the percentage of time devoted to responsive services. Parents in the group specified only slight changes in current emphases to meet their ideal time allocations.

### **Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach**

Throughout the interviews all participants stressed their belief that prevention and early intervention (so problems do not reach the crisis stage) were the keys to a successful counseling and guidance program. At this age, prevention was seen as the most important focus. The counselor said her current and ideal balance is 60 percent prevention and 40 percent intervention. In the counselor's view, ideal prevention activities would include lessons on safe play, drug education, good touch/bad touch, and social skills. Prevention activities would also include parenting skills classes. The principal suggested the balance should be 70-80 percent prevention and 20-30 percent intervention, and felt this was the current balance. Teachers and parents in the focus group saw prevention as the focus of the current program. Ideally, these teachers prefer 60-70 percent prevention and 30-40

**Table 1.2**  
**Perceived Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #1**

Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Counselor	40%	45%	35%	30%	5%	5%	15%	15%	5%	0%
Principal	30%	75%	50%	15%	10%	5%	10%	5%	0%	0%
School Staff*	38%	50%	33%	28%	10%	10%	20%	13%	0%	0%
Parents*	38%	36%	24%	28%	13%	13%	19%	19%	10%	6%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff and parent perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

percent intervention. All participants agreed that there were currently not enough intervention services provided. They did not want to change the balance between prevention and intervention but stressed that the part-time status of the counselor greatly limited needed responsive services. In their opinion, prevention and intervention both could be more fully addressed with a full-time counselor. One teacher suggested that intervention may be curtailed to some extent because students at this age may not be able to determine if they have a problem; therefore, it is mostly up to staff to identify problems.

### Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model

As judged by all participants, the biggest obstacle to moving toward a more preventive and comprehensive model was lack of available counselor time. A 20 percent-time counselor cannot adequately serve the needs of 565 students, in the group's opinion. The counselor emphasized that students who need more intervention should receive it from the counselor and not have to be referred elsewhere. She indicated that a more comprehensive and preventive model would include all students receiving classroom guidance appropriate for their age level. One teacher expressed that with more counselor time, teachers and the counselor could repeat and reinforce lessons, increasing the likelihood that students would learn the concepts or ideas.

Addressing needs and building relationships and trust with students and their parents are time-consuming activities that cannot be implemented fully within current time constraints, according to focus group participants. Under ideal circumstances, one parent and a teacher suggested two or three counselors are

needed. If more counselors can be added, it was suggested that one be bilingual. One parent said that she would "just beg for one full-time counselor."

The current budget, other than funding a full-time counselor, was not mentioned as a problem. The counselor indicated that some clerical assistance would be beneficial, but that if she were full-time, she would not need clerical help. She would like to have a PC to do her paperwork here. The principal expressed that if the counselor were full-time, she probably would need clerical help.

The counselor saw the district moving toward a comprehensive model through establishing the districtwide counseling group to build a district counseling and guidance program. Having three social workers and the psychologist available has also provided more resources for counselors, freeing more of their time for direct student services. One parent and the counselor suggested that the district fund full-day kindergarten classes because having students in school all day would give school staff more opportunity to support and help students and give them positive reinforcement. If the counselor were full-time, she could participate in this positive support effort. The counselor felt that the ESC could help by providing information and recommendations on what counseling programs and curricula are age appropriate and making curricula available for counselors to review.

Participants believed that parent/family involvement needs to be strengthened to make the program more effective. The counselor wants to offer parenting skills classes and be more available to parents. As it is now, according to teachers and the principal in the focus group, they hesitate to refer parents (especially

in crisis situations) to the counselor because of the probable wait entailed. All interviewees expressed that now there are more requests from families for school staff to solve family problems. The need for family involvement has increased, according to the principal, because of the greater needs students bring to school today. The counselor emphasized the need for greater parent involvement so that parents can reinforce what children learn at school. All interviewed agreed that more information should be disseminated to parents about the counseling and guidance program.

Participants felt that most members of the community are not knowledgeable about the counselor's role or the elementary counseling and guidance program. The principal pointed out that the community and parents are more familiar with high school counselors.

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*“You either pay now or pay later.”*

—Principal

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Interviewees specified that there should be more community education about the counselor's roles and responsibilities, especially at the elementary school. Teachers in the group emphasized that these young children spend such a small part of their day in school that their home and community life have a great influence on them. All participants expressed the need for the community to be more involved in the whole school. Interviewees would like the community to be more available to help the school identify resources for students and their families and to help with paper-work involved in the referral process. The counselor concluded that having one agency in the community handling all youth services could make her job easier.

## Policy Concerns

### Characteristics and Indicators of Success

Focus group members offered ways to judge success of the counseling and guidance program.

- For all participants, the key measure of success is a full-time counselor at the school. Prevention and early intervention are the foundations of the program.

- The counselor specified that all four components of the TEA Comprehensive Model are addressed in a successful program and there is positive feedback from teachers and parents.
- The principal expressed that in a successful program student benefits can be seen. Students being able to tell an adult about their problems is a measure of success. She stressed that children are more open when the program is successful; if they are victims of child abuse, they are more likely to tell a counselor so the problem can be reported and remedied. There are fewer behavioral problems when the counselor successfully works with students.
- One parent suggested that a successful program includes an open door policy for students. Students see the counselor as always available. Another parent saw strong parental involvement in the program and working directly with parents as important.
- One teacher mentioned that a successful program includes parenting classes. Another teacher saw success as an age-appropriate program with preventive curriculum, so all students understand what is being taught. A third teacher believed that parents are more comfortable going to the school counselor because no fees are charged.

### Messages for Policy Makers

According to the counselor, policy makers should mandate the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC descriptions of counselor roles and responsibilities and require that a counselor spend a certain percent of his or her time in the classroom. She believes this will prevent counselors from being used as assistant principals or substitute teachers.

The principal advocated a broader role for policy makers including supporting children's needs to a greater extent and focusing on prevention and early interventions because “you either pay now or pay later.” She expressed that policy makers should pay more attention to the needs of students and how they are affected by societal changes, such as increases in child abuse.

## Potential Areas for Policy Attention

The following were identified and condensed from interviewee comments.

- Adequately staff elementary counseling and guidance programs by providing sufficient funding so the student-to-counselor ratio is more reasonable.
- Provide age-appropriate training for counselors, depending on grade levels served.
- Adopt the TEA Comprehensive Model for all counselors, in statute.
- Require that counselors spend a certain percentage of time in the classroom.
- Encourage ESCs to be more of a resource to counselors on guidance curriculum and materials that are appropriate for varying age levels.
- Provide funding for full-day kindergarten classes.

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## Elementary School: Campus 2

### Background

### Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

#### Campus Characteristics

This campus is located in a non-metropolitan, stable-growth district with much lower than average district wealth and serves 409 students in Grades 3-5. Under the 1995 accountability system, academic performance at the campus was rated *Acceptable*, a rating received by the majority of campuses statewide. Table 2.1 summarizes student, teacher, and staffing characteristics at this campus.

#### Interview Sources

Interviews were conducted with the principal, counselor, adult focus group, and student focus group. The adult focus group included the counselor, one parent, and seven teachers. The student focus group consisted of nine students from Grades 3-5.

#### Development and History on Campus

According to the principal and counselor, there is no written mission statement for the guidance and counseling program because of high teacher turnover in the past and a vacant counselor position during part of the previous year. The counselor has been at this campus for less than a year and teacher turnover decreased during the most recent year of the principal's three year tenure.

With the recent stability in staffing, the principal felt confident that the campus was now able to devote time toward developing the guidance and counseling program. According to the counselor, the program is being developed by working closely with teachers to learn what they perceive students need and by helping

**Table 2.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #2**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	0%	0%	Number of Counselor Positions	1
Hispanic	100%	78%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	None
White	1%	19%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	409:1
Other Minority	0%	4%	Number of Teachers	27
Economically Disadvantaged	95%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	6 Years
Limited English Proficient	80%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.

Note: Ethnicity percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

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*“A lot of people do not think that these children have a lot of problems, but they do.”*

—Teacher

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teachers understand what her role is as a counselor. She met with teachers once at the beginning of the school year and plans to meet with them again at the end of the school year. She felt that organizing a committee would be helpful in formulating a program mission.

### Goals and Expectations

The counselor saw the mission of the guidance and counseling program as responding to the needs of the student population by providing some stability, and addressing students' emotional and social needs that are not being met at home. She said, “The primary mission is to help these children socially, emotionally...Ultimately, our goal [is]...to help them academically. The needs are there, they are tremendous, and that is something we all recognize.” Although the counselor felt she had not been very successful in this area, she believed her job also included educating the community and parents.

The principal also viewed the counselor's role to include enhancing parental involvement by meeting with parents when their children have discipline problems, coordinating parenting sessions, making presentations, and bringing in other speakers. However, the principal felt that the thrust of guidance is to encourage students to become independent and to be good citizens by emphasizing self-esteem and motivation.

Teachers' expectations of the counselor are similar. As one teacher commented, “I feel that the counseling department is here to help our students. At this age a lot of people do not think that these children have a lot of problems, but they do...I think they need to be counseled a little and help them deal with the problems that they may have at home.” Another teacher stated that the counselor's role also includes helping teachers learn to deal with students.

Students in the focus group mentioned that the counselor was there daily to help them learn to get along with

peers and teachers, encourage them to do well on school work, feel good about themselves, and figure out what they want to be when they grow up.

### Campus Implementation

According to the principal, each week the counselor works with small groups composed of students dealing with issues such as loss of a family member, abuse, discipline problems, and low motivation. In the groups, the counselor not only talks with students but also uses activities to teach and counsel the students, which is most effective, in her opinion.

The principal, teachers, and counselor reported that the counselor conducts enrichment periods with two classes per day on an ongoing basis, where planned activities are presented dealing with a monthly theme such as self-esteem or motivation. One teacher felt that these periods were important because the counselor is able to get in touch with all of the students, many whom she would not see otherwise because she is very busy. The counselor mentioned that she and school staff designed the enrichment (guidance) curriculum incorporating district materials. In addition, she uses teacher input to prepare special lessons on issues of immediate concern. For example, a lesson on violence prevention was prepared to counteract students fighting and arguing in school.

Drug prevention has been another area targeted by guidance and counseling. More than \$2,000 dollars of the counseling and guidance budget was spent on drug education during the school year, which included a drug- and alcohol-free week involving different activities and speakers at the school.

The principal said that the counselor also administers programs designed to increase students' self-esteem and motivation. For example, the school operates a small store where students can redeem tokens for good behavior and prizes for positive performance. In addition, the principal and counselor said that a committee of teachers chooses one male and one female student to be “student of the week.” Students receiving this honor get a T-shirt and have their pictures displayed for the week. Monthly programs mentioned include an award given to the class with the best behavior and an award given for the cleanest classroom. For the first award, students are given a pizza party and banner.

As previously mentioned, the counselor and principal indicated that teacher involvement in the guidance and counseling program is very important in ensuring students' success. For the counselor, open communication with teachers is a priority. Currently, the counselor reported meeting with teachers individually on an "as needed" basis. In addition, teachers make frequent referrals, and the counselor keeps them well informed of developments. The principal noted that the teachers' relationships with the counselor are very comfortable: "The teachers...feel real free to go and talk to her...about the students.... And when they refer students, it is not like referring the student, then never hearing about what happened to that student...She always comes back to the teacher and says this is what is happening to the student."

The counselor has worked to increase parental involvement in the school. The school also applied for and received additional funding from the district for a program to increase parental involvement. One parent mentioned parenting skills training she obtained when the counselor brought in speakers from an outside agency. These sessions scheduled throughout the year targeting Hispanic families addressed topics such as discipline, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, and strategies for raising children.

The counselor and principal indicated that the school district is not involved in addressing student transition from primary to elementary school. The school has not yet put a program in place, but the counselor has been in contact with the primary school counselor. To assist the transition from fifth grade to middle school, the counselor conducts special lessons and activities. The counselor and the nurse visit classes, show a video on personal growth and development, and discuss issues presented. Also, the counselor and middle school counselor meet with students to talk to them about expectations at the middle school level.

According to the counselor, the district and community are poor and isolated. She and other school staff spend a lot of energy bringing community resources to the school. She feels that the school is in some ways responsible for helping keep community resources cohesive. The counselor also mentioned a center housing a central network of community resources, which is used to hold classes and special programs to meet community needs. The counselor reported drawing support from the community such as local law enforcement officials who participate in assemblies,

work with students, and make donations. She also works with local social services representatives to meet students' needs for intervention and networks with them to follow up on students. Despite the efforts of school staff, the counselor said, "It is still hard for people to get out and get what they need from the community because there is just not a whole lot there." The principal stated that most of their support is from outside the community.

Although the budget for guidance and counseling has increased and will continue to increase, the principal and counselor report that it is inadequate. Despite working within a tight budget, the counselor stated that the principal "has been great in allowing me more funding for my program for other areas to address such as sexual abuse, self-esteem.... Any resources, videos... She has been very helpful with allowing me the funding to get those things."

The principal stated that she does her best to keep the counselor's paperwork to a minimum and has kept the counselor's time away from administrative duties such as student scheduling, processing records of incoming students, and disciplinary issues. Despite the principal's effort, the counselor relies on the school's secretary because guidance and counseling does not have clerical staff.

According to the counselor, she uses a computer to prepare communications with teachers, parents, and community resources. She also said a student database is currently being evaluated and will be implemented eventually. According to the principal, the database will contain student information regarding test scores, grades, medical records, and personal histories.

Other equipment and materials in the guidance and counseling program include audiovisual materials focusing on topics such as sexual abuse, substance abuse, family loss, and self-esteem. The principal noted that even though they are a poor district, each classroom has a TV, VCR, and three computers.

## **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

### **Areas Prompting Need for Change**

The counselor and principal indicated that the guidance and counseling program and the school aim at

meeting the needs of all students, and they have succeeded to a certain extent. The counselor said that students from migrant families and the large number of students receiving special education services are not receiving “their fair share” of attention and services. The counselor also indicated that she does not always have the expertise to meet the needs of students receiving special education services. The principal would like the guidance and counseling program to direct more attention to students who come from non-

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*“Every campus is isolated.”*

—Principal

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supportive homes or family environments and students who are neglected, abused, have divorced parents, or who have had a parent die. According to the teachers interviewed, students who should get more attention are those with emotional and personal problems and those with behavior and discipline problems, whether or not students are receiving special education or regular education services. Students in the focus group thought students needing attention from the guidance and counseling program were those who “act mean,” “make other students feel bad,” and who “behave badly.”

The counselor discussed how changes in students’ needs have changed the role of the counselor. She said that student needs are much greater than when she taught fourteen years ago: “I just see a lot [of] our youth in trouble and it just seems to be getting worse.” In her view, the issues youth face today that have considerably affected her role as a counselor are drug abuse and violence, with more students facing these issues at an earlier age. She said, “I see younger kids having trouble with those things now more so than when I had freshmen.” The principal also noted these problems and added that the Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC) needs to change to include parental education and involvement. The principal said that even when they try to serve all students because everybody has needs, they must prioritize and, thus, the highest risk student is targeted to receive counseling services. The principal remarked, “Everybody has so many needs...We have our kids here that have extra needs, and she is seeing them double. She sees them in the classroom, and she sees them on a separate basis and individual....Yes, there are some, the ones that are getting abused,... neglected, the ones that have lost the parent, divorce.

Those are the ones that probably need the counselor more, but I cannot say that the other ones don’t need them.” Some students in the focus group agreed that the counselor is not always available when they need to talk to her. The students explained that they go to see the counselor when the teacher refers them or when they have problems at home and want to talk to her, but they also said they would prefer to have more time with her.

The counselor said that the addition of a parent volunteer or a social worker to just work with parents would be an asset to guidance and counseling. The addition of a social worker would be most valuable because of the special needs of the majority of students on this campus who are economically disadvantaged. Both counselor and principal also agreed that clerical assistance for the counselor is needed. The principal felt that adding a clerical assistant to work three days a week would be a great help. She also felt that a district TAAS coordinator would relieve some of the counselor’s time pressure. Although the counselor said the present student-counselor ratio is “manageable,” the principal felt that a 200 to 1 ratio would be ideal. Both the principal and counselor felt that a second counselor would also be beneficial, even if only on a part-time basis. The principal said she would like a second counselor to be responsible primarily for duties such as TAAS testing paperwork and bilingual compliance.

Increasing parental involvement and community and district support also were recommended by the principal and counselor as areas that would help decrease the counselor’s workload. As mentioned earlier, the counselor and principal indicated that the school district does not have a formal program to assist students with the transition from primary to elementary school. The lack of communication between the schools was pointed out by the principal: “Every campus is isolated.”

Although the counselor and principal stated that every effort is made to make funds available for guidance and counseling, the budget is an area that could be improved. The counselor would like more funding for the program to better address the needs of students from migrant families.

## Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs

Adult focus group participants said they were satisfied with the way students' needs are being met by the counseling and guidance program. The focus group rated personal needs of students highest, academic needs ranked lower, and career needs were rated the lowest. The program emphasis on personal needs, according to the counselor, reflects the belief that without a solid sense of self-esteem, a student may not be able to succeed academically. Similarly, the principal stated, "You need to have your personal development first, you have to have that before the academics....and if you don't have academics, then you don't have a career."

Concentrating on personal needs of students, according to the counselor, stems from children not getting these needs met at home: "A lot of the children do not have that [self-esteem] basis, and we know that a lot of the parents from these families do not have the skills to give the children." A teacher agreed with the counselor: "Academics are our main objective here, but in order to get that we need to work on the personal." Regarding to the counselor's attention to academics, a member of the student focus group commented, "She [counselor] is always telling us that we are smart and that we can pass the TAAS."

## Emphasis in Allocating Services According to the Comprehensive Model Components

The counselor, school staff, and parents were asked to estimate the percentage of time the guidance and counseling program allocates to each of the four TEA Comprehensive Model components. Table 2.2 contains participants' perceptions of counseling time allocations at this campus.

According to the counselor, school staff, and a parent, the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC description of the counselor's role accurately describes the areas in which the school's counselor works.

Adult focus group participants agreed that guidance and counseling focuses most on the guidance curriculum. However, school staff and parents estimated that about 50 percent of guidance and counseling time was spent on guidance curriculum, compared to 80 percent mentioned by the counselor. The adult focus group participants reported the current balance between components is close to their ideal and should not change much. One general change suggested by the counselor and school staff was to devote more time to responsive services. Regarding her ideal, the counselor said, "I gave a little more time to responsive services to balance that a little bit—guidance curriculum, 60 [percent]; responsive services, 20 [percent]." One teacher argued that although guidance curriculum and responsive services should constitute the core activities of the counseling and guidance program, increasing clerical support to the counselor would allow the other two components of the program, individual planning and system support, to be better addressed.

## Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach

The counselor said that she devotes 80 percent to prevention efforts and the other 20 percent to intervention or counseling, with most of her prevention work done through teaching the guidance curriculum. She said, "When I go and teach in the classroom, that is prevention, and I have done that all year." The counselor consults with teachers regarding the particular topics that should be addressed in the classroom guidance lessons. The principal also felt the guidance

**Table 2.2**  
**Perceived Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #2**

Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Counselor	80%	60%	10%	20%	5%	10%	5%	10%	0%	0%
School Staff*	48%	47%	27%	30%	13%	12%	11%	11%	0%	0%
Parent*	50%	—	15%	—	20%	—	15%	—	0%	0%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff and parent perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

and counseling program was more preventive and, in her estimation, 90 percent of counselor time was spent on prevention.

Prevention also is addressed through out-of-class activities. For example, fifth grade students meet on

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*“The counselor is here to help everybody, not just certain students.”*

—Principal

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Saturdays to take part in a drug prevention program. According to one parent, teachers also address prevention in health and hygiene classes. The principal said efforts are focused on preventing academic failure: “She [the counselor] doesn’t deal with absence or truancy. We have nothing like that. But she does a little bit of prevention for... the drop-outs.”

### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

According to the principal and counselor at this campus, the counselor’s role is not fully understood by parents or other members of the community. She said that parents need to meet the counselor and understand the counselor’s role because “the counselor is here to help everybody, not just certain students.” Many parents have little contact with the school, the principal and counselor indicated, and do not even know of the existence of the counselor; some of the parents have not taken the time to meet with the counselor and get to know her. Likewise, teachers mentioned not being aware that the counselor’s role is so broad. Teachers in the focus group reported that the counselor has worked with the parents to help them realize that they must take responsibility and be part of the solution. The students, who have responded positively to the new counselor, are helping to educate the parents in this regard, according to the counselor and teachers interviewed.

The counselor reported that social needs are tremendous in this community, and they are given priority over academic objectives: “We cannot continue with the academic basis—they don’t have that in place—because, again, ... back home there is a need for shelter, for nutrition...The children that come to school, you know that the meal here at school is their only meal. We know that for a fact. I have done

home visits. I have seen these homes.” The counselor said that the community expects the counselor to act as a “surrogate parent.” She also said that to redress these social needs community members must become actively involved in helping students because “they don’t realize that every child needs help.”

The teachers and a parent in the focus group said that the counselor performs more activities than those indicated in the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC statements. Both the counselor and principal identified one area of counselor responsibility that does not follow these, testing coordination and administration, which consume a considerable amount of the counselor’s time and reduce the counselor’s ability to enhance delivery of counseling and guidance services. Also interfering are emergencies, and the amount of time spent with parent-related tasks according to the principal. The counselor indicated that she would like to have more training in interpreting assessment data and would like to see the program do more to meet students’ career awareness needs.

The TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC statements constitute a sufficient basis for evaluating counselor’s performance, according to both the counselor and principal. Concerning the TEMPSC, the principal said, “If you said this is what we want

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*“The office is here to help their children in any way that they need help — academically, socially, any of these things.”*

—Counselor

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your campus to do, it won’t affect us because that is what she is doing right now.” However, she also explained that since the program is currently being forged and defined, no formal counselor evaluation has yet been designed for use at this campus.

The school, according to the counselor, needs to increase the community’s awareness and knowledge of the guidance and counseling program and of the counselor’s role and responsibilities. The community needs to recognize that the counselor is available and accessible and that the “office is here to help their children in any way that they need help—academically, socially, any of those things.” The counselor would also like to increase her network with the

community, both through the community center and through law enforcement officials.

The parenting sessions organized by the guidance and counseling program are very helpful, in the principal's opinion. All sessions are conducted in Spanish and are responsive to the Hispanic culture. Yet, the turnout ranging from 10 to 35 parents at these sessions was deemed inadequate. Getting parents involved is difficult because many parents work, are busy otherwise, or do not have transportation. One parent explained that parental involvement has actually decreased this year. It was higher last year, when the school offered a nutrition program for parents and the community aide provided transportation.

The principal and counselor have attempted to increase parent involvement in the school by offering activities such as sewing for the school and week long workshops on topics such as herbal medicine or storytelling. The counselor, according to teachers, also recruits parents and visits homes of students who have problems to confer with their parents. The counselor would like to increase the program's contact

with the parents and with the community as a whole by using a parent newsletter or some other media both in Spanish and English and by working, as one parent suggested, through the community center. The counselor would also like to obtain funding specifically for a parent program.

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*“One person is not going to do it all.  
It needs to be a team effort.”*

—Parent

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Adult focus group interviewees agreed that the parents can help the counselor by realizing that helping children is a team effort that involves parents, teachers, and counselor. As one parent stated, “One person is not going to do it all. It needs to be a team effort.”

Opinions from student focus group members about characteristics of the current counselor and what she does for them are summarized in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance at Campus #2**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor helps me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	9	—	—
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	9	—	—
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	7	1	1
D. understand the good things about my homework.	6	—	3
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	9	—	—
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	7	1	1
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	7	—	2
2. I am excited about the work we are doing in the guidance program	9	—	—
3. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.	7	1	1
4. I see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	3	3	3
5. The counselor is fun to be around.	9	—	—

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

## Policy Concerns

### Characteristics and Indicators of Success

Focus group members offered ways to judge success of the counseling and guidance program.

- *A preventive approach to classroom management.* The counselor sees a successful guidance and counseling program as one where a teacher and counselor team up so the teachers understand and embrace the program's objectives, incorporate these objectives into their classroom teaching, and both teachers and parents are better able to deal with students. The principal also identified a decline in discipline referrals, absence of vandalism or drug problems, and an increase in the attendance rate to be measures of success.
- *High motivation for academic success.* In the principal's opinion, a successful guidance and counseling program generates a high level of self-esteem and positive attitudes towards school in all students and contributes to a high degree of academic success, parental involvement, and the elimination of abuse. The principal also mentioned evaluating student performance on the TAAS and other tests appropriate for assessing students who have been in bilingual programs through the third grade.
- *Improved self-esteem.* Participants seem to agree that success cannot be measured by academic success only. The counselor stated, "If the self-esteem is not there, and the motivation is not there, then it is going to affect... the academic part. If we could work on that and we see that we are improving there, then we will know that we are reaching those needs one way or another." A teacher said, "Their grades may not be that high, but they are showing improvement. Even with them, with their own self-esteem, they seem to be better."
- *Less emphasis on intervention.* A successful program, according to the teachers, places a greater emphasis on prevention, consequently having fewer students in need of counseling. The teachers and the counselor suggested student self-sufficiency (less student need for intervention) as a measure of program success.
- *Uses evaluation.* According to the teachers, principal, counselor, and a parent, in a successful guid-

ance and counseling program, the impact of the program on students is monitored and evaluated—for example, whether or not students' self-esteem and academic performance improves. The counselor suggested evaluating goal attainment on a yearly basis, integrating outcomes of teacher activities targeting specific components in the TEA comprehensive model.

### Messages for Policy Makers

The principal stated that policy makers could help counseling and guidance by mandating a student-to-counselor ratio: "[For instance, if] you have 450 students, you should have two counselors....And it should be a law.... In the last three years that I've been here, this year has been the first year that we have...a full-time counselor. And for the first year that I was here, we only had...two counselors for the whole district." In addition, she suggested that lowering the student-to-counselor ratio in elementary schools could help counselors focus more on prevention.

Regarding the professional identity of the counselor, the counselor said that policy makers need to define the counselors' role and responsibilities and remove responsibilities such as testing coordination and administration that interfere with time available for services to students. She also believes that policy makers can support guidance and counseling programs by including other staff support, such as clerical help, as part of the description of these programs. One teacher agreed that lack of clerical support needed to be addressed if counselors are going to be able to do what is expected of them. The counselor further stated that current statute specifying the roles and responsibilities of grant-funded counselors be extended to all counselors: "I have always felt that we needed to be more accountable, and that accountability is there."

### Potential Areas for Policy Attention

The following areas for policy attention were compiled from interviewee comments.

- More attention should be given to dealing with the anxiety levels of teachers and counselors with respect to the TAAS.
- More should be done to educate teachers and others about the potential scope of professional roles and tasks performed by school counselors.

- More research should be conducted on the relationship between student academic progress and counseling and guidance activities designed to address students' personal needs, such as improving self-esteem and managing behavior in the classroom.
- More leadership is needed from the Education Service Centers in providing training and staff development for counseling and guidance programs and increased assistance with resources and materials.
- More encouragement should be given at the district and campus levels to better communicate and coordinate counseling and guidance program services among campuses and with community agencies.
- Provide counselors with clerical and other support they need to perform more fully their professional counseling roles and responsibilities.

## Elementary School: Campus 3

### Background

#### Campus Characteristics

This kindergarten through Grade 4 campus is in a district located in an independent town, with lower than average district wealth. The campus has over 650 students. In the 1995 state accountability system, this campus received an *Acceptable* rating, as did the majority of campuses in Texas. Table 3.1 summarizes some characteristics of students, teachers, and counselors.

#### Interview Sources

Interviews were conducted with the principal, counselor, adult focus group, and student focus group. The adult focus group included the counselor, principal, two parents, and five teachers. The student group consisted of nine students in Grade 4.

### Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

#### Development and History on Campus

The principal explained that several years ago the counseling and guidance program consisted of a limited classroom guidance curriculum and responsive services on an "as needed basis." Five years ago, the principal and counselor conducted a comprehensive review of the counseling and guidance program. Based on this review, student needs were analyzed and prioritized, and the program was modified. In the first year, low student self-esteem was considered a large enough problem that the counselor started a weekly counseling group for these students. During subsequent years, groups were added as new student needs were identified.

**Table 3.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #3**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	3%	0%	Number of Counselor Positions	2
Hispanic	60%	12%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	1
White	36%	88%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	338:1
Other Minority	1%	0%	Number of Teachers	43
Economically Disadvantaged	67%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	13 Years
Limited English Proficient	22%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.

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*“When the child comes in, it’s not just ‘here is my brain and teach me’. . . Our major role in there is to facilitate the learning by dealing with the whole child.”*

—Counselor

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In the view of adult focus group members, another change affecting the program stems from increased requests from parents for the counselor to “fix it” or solve the problem. Because of these additional demands and expectations, the counselor’s role is seen, by the principal, to have expanded beyond just what happens at school. The counselor remarked that, because of the increased demand and increased number of problems (such as child abuse) that she cannot address alone, she has had to look for services outside of school.

In addition to one locally-funded counselor position, two years ago the school gained a second counselor position, funded by a competitive grant from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). This grant, designated for elementary schools with high numbers of students at risk, required that the counseling and guidance program used by the grant counselor be based on the TEA Comprehensive Model. According to the principal, a decision was made to use the model to define the other counselor’s responsibilities as well, for consistency across the counseling and guidance program.

## Goals and Expectations

The school’s written mission is: “In partnership with parents and community, . . . elementary faculty and staff will provide all children with quality instruction and equal educational opportunities. This partnership will be responsible for each child’s success in developing to his/her fullest potential.” The number one priority is maximizing students’ academic performance, in the principal’s judgment. This is also the focus of the campus improvement plan. The principal noted that the school’s vision was planned to be realistic and in line with available resources. Although there is not a written counseling and guidance philosophy, the principal sees the program as essential to enhance and facilitate students’ academic performance. She specified that the role of the counseling and guidance program in elementary schools should be developmental guidance, with responsive services when needed

and less emphasis on testing. Thus, she sees counselors’ roles as teaching developmental guidance lessons and assisting and making resources available to teachers. In her view, counselors have expertise and training to do interventions of a different kind than teachers.

Similarly, the counselor expressed that the role of the counseling and guidance program is one of facilitating and setting the groundwork for learning. From her perspective, guidance covers the preventive aspects and teaches coping skills to students early in school, to cut down on crisis management later on, while counseling facilitates how students deal with peers, parents, and teachers. She thinks another of her duties is helping students learn to communicate with their teachers. She also emphasized the need to see the child from a holistic perspective: “Yes. School districts will come across academic goals first, and I think it goes back to dealing with the whole child. When the child comes in, it’s not just ‘here is my brain and teach me’ . . . Our major role in there is to facilitate the learning by dealing with the whole child.”

Parents in the adult focus group believed that one goal of the program is for the counselor to talk to students when they will not talk to anyone else. Although they did not feel qualified to define the program mission, parents do provide feedback to counselors by calling about what they need.

Teachers interviewed see the role of the counseling and guidance program as helping students work in peer groups, as well as helping the whole family through training in parenting skills, responding to phone calls, or making home visits. They also see counselors as teaching students to work out problems by themselves, without going to their teachers. The participating teachers explained that the counselor attends sessions they have with students’ parents about student needs. They viewed the program as having evolved positively to meet changing community needs. Teachers expressed that, in the past, only children with problems had contact with the counselor, and now all children have access.

Because the counseling and guidance program follows the TEA Comprehensive Model, expectations of this model are areas of focus. The counselor emphasized that she referred to and followed the model as much as possible. In addition, the principal expects the counselor to deal with disruptive students so other stu-

dents' school work is not interrupted; to provide information necessary for evaluating the counseling and guidance program; and to interpret test results as a member of the campus improvement team. Participants agreed that their primary expectation is for the program and counselor to enhance students' personal development so students will be more focused for academics. Adult focus group members stressed that the role of the community in the counseling and guidance program is to support what school staff and parents have determined is needed, because those directly and regularly involved in school were in the best position to know the needs.

## Campus Implementation

From the counselor's perspective, the counseling and guidance program consists of three main areas. The first is guidance curriculum lessons conducted weekly in all classrooms, when there are two counselors available. Lessons cover areas such as social skills, decision-making skills, handling stressful situations, listening skills, communication skills, making good choices, dealing with anger, and getting along with others. The second is weekly counseling groups for students with low self-esteem, with divorced parents, new to the school, from families where there is alcohol/drug abuse, from dysfunctional families, susceptible to gang influence, and with Attention Deficit Disorder. The third area is one-to-one counseling sessions for students referred by teachers, parents, the student himself or herself, or the counselor. These one-to-one counseling sessions generally focus on areas of need. By finding out students' needs, the counselor identifies problems that she cannot solve. Solutions may include an adult mentor, or a referral to local mental health agencies, social services, or child protective services. Additionally, the counselor participates in the campus improvement team, teaches classroom management skills to teachers, when needed, helps teachers work with parents, makes home visits, prepares reports required by the grant and principal, previews new curriculum materials, and communicates with other counselors to provide continuity of services when one of her students moves to another school.

Student focus group participants reported their contact with the counselor in classroom guidance lessons. They indicated using some strategies taught by the counselor, either at school or home. Some students reported seeing the counselor at her office to discuss problems such as getting along with other students,

handling conflict, dealing with students who insult, misbehave, or fight, and coping when they feel bad, sad, or need reassurance because they are new in school. Students in the focus group reported that they do not only see the counselor when they are in trouble. They indicated that they liked the counselor coming each week to do guidance lessons. These students perceived groups as valuable because they can talk about their feelings, and they also feel the counselor is there to help them solve their problems. For instance, one student described a way that counseling and guidance had helped her: "Well, it gives you a better way to solve your problems than violence."

Members of the adult focus group perceived that the program was reaching all students. The counselor's availability or "open door policy for students" was corroborated by adult and student focus group members. All adult focus group members concurred that, generally, their expectations for the program and counselor were met. Adult participants believed that this campus' program has gone above and beyond other schools in the district. In their estimation, the district should provide the quality services that this school provides, districtwide.

Teachers interviewed indicated that they stay in the classroom during guidance lessons, not only to hear lessons, but to observe student responses, and then use the counselor's terminology to further reinforce what is taught. If the student's needs are more involved, teachers work closely with the counselor to bring that child's case to the student/teacher assistance team (a team comprised of staff whose purpose is to help teachers solve problems related to behavior, academics, and emotional or social needs of students, including possible recommendation for special education referral).

All adult participants expressed support for the counselor's role. The counselor felt she has support from the principal and teachers, knowledge that the principal has confidence in her work, and that she works as part of a team, not alone. The principal expressed that she and the assistant principal handle TAAS administration and coordination because she wants to maximize the counselor's time with students. Also the principal stressed that the counselor is not used as a teacher substitute or to attend administrative meetings: "I really feel like their [the counselors'] time needs to be spent with kids, and I think an exemplary program allows for that. You protect their time as you would a classroom teacher's time."

The counselor and principal emphasized that needs assessments guide program planning. The counselor conducts a formal written needs assessment of teachers and parents on what should be addressed. More informally, she uses teacher referrals to identify problem areas and plans different counseling groups accordingly. Parents help further define the program by calling or visiting the counselor about their children's needs. The counselor specified checking with teachers on an ongoing basis on students' progress to determine if more assistance is needed.

The addition of the grant-funded counselor, with the locally-funded counselor, lowered the student-to-counselor ratio to about 350 to 1. According to adult focus group members, this ratio has allowed all students to be served with the most essential aspects of the counseling and guidance program. However, at present, the locally-funded counselor position is vacant, so there is only one counselor. This has doubled the student load on the remaining counselor. The counselor pointed out that the program was restructured to ensure that student needs were met with one counselor, rather than two.

There is no secretary assigned to the counseling and guidance program. The principal explained that the counselor has access to the three clerical staff in the office. The counselor mentioned that she did not use these staff very often. The principal added that the counselor works very closely with the school nurse when students have health problems.

The principal stated that the counseling and guidance department has an annual campus budget, developed by the counselors, based on program needs and available local funds. These funds are allocated to school departments based on the campus improvement plan and its priority areas. The principal thought that the current local budget allows the counseling and guidance program to meet its objectives. In the counselor's opinion, the local budget is not sufficient; she only has been able to purchase some curriculum materials. The counselor explained that the TEA grant funds provide for counselors' staff development and purchase of guidance curriculum materials. When the grant funds were spent, the counselor could not attend staff development unless she secured other funds. For example, she attended a drug and alcohol abuse conference paid for by a local agency.

The principal said that the counselor has a computer in her office for paperwork and reports. The counselor described the equipment as an old computer that works.

Availability of qualified applicants has been a key factor in program implementation, according to the principal. When the grant-counselor position was funded for this campus, so were several other grant-counselor positions in the district. Districtwide, the principal perceived that there were several top candidates available. When the principal could not hire her first choice, she opted not to hire anyone and wait for an applicant who met her requirements of being bilingual and experienced at the elementary level and with students at risk. This position was left open for half a school year, until the current counselor applied. The principal affirmed that she would certainly consider teachers as candidates for counseling positions.

The principal pointed out that the TEA Comprehensive Model was being used to better define the district's support of the campus' efforts. In her opinion, the program has influenced the district to take a more active role in recruiting outside resources to support counselors, such as the district social worker. Additionally, the counselor saw district involvement in adoption of a social skills curriculum districtwide for students in prekindergarten through Grade 6. She added that the Education Service Center (ESC) occasionally offered inservice training specifically for counselors.

In the principal's judgment, the counselor works closely with local agencies and community organizations to obtain services for students that the school cannot provide. For example, the counselor works with the local Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR) facility for counseling or screening service referrals; the child protective services agency for child abuse concerns; and the local alcohol/drug abuse prevention center for prevention materials, school prevention activities, and a weekly support group for students who have alcohol or drug abuse in their families. With the counselor maintaining formal and informal contacts with agencies and organizations, she is able to get some services for students very quickly, from the principal's perspective. The counselor explained that the main contributions made by individuals in the community were donating their time as student mentors or making financial contributions to the program, especially for student incentives. She

viewed the mentor program as successful in that some children who received a mentor in kindergarten still had the same mentor two or three years later.

## **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

### **Areas Prompting Need for Change**

The principal emphasized that, over the last few years, the school population has become more diverse with increases in the number of students at risk, Hispanic students, and students with serious family needs, such as dysfunctional families, alcohol or drug abuse, physical abuse, and lack of food or clothing. According to both counselor and principal, children's needs have changed; needs are more serious and complex today, reflecting an increased need for community services. The principal said: "We're seeing normal children exposed to situations and coping with stresses that kids never had to cope with before." Additionally, the principal sees an increasing need for students to accept differences of others, such as special education students. Adult focus group participants see the role of the counselor and counseling and guidance program as expanding to meet increased needs and expectations. The counselor sees this expansion occurring without any increases in resources.

Currently the student-to-counselor ratio is too high, according to both principal and counselor. The approximately 350 to 1 ratio, in their view, limits their capacity to fully serve all students in a proactive way. Ideally, both counselor and principal would add another counselor to lower the ratio to 250 to 1. This would allow more classroom coverage, more services for middle-level students, parenting classes, and time to find curriculum appropriate for the increasing diversity of students.

In the counselor's judgment, local budget limitations have hindered her from fully performing her duties and responsibilities. She and the principal stressed that additional money for a clerical assistant would help with her paperwork. The counselor wanted local funds for (a) staff development for counselors, (b) more curriculum materials appropriate for all students, and (c) additional student incentives.

## **Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs**

Adult participants concurred that meeting personal development needs was strongest at their school and most essential for students. At the elementary level, members of the adult focus group, except the principal, stressed that the counselor's number one priority was students' personal and social skills development.

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*"We're seeing normal children exposed to situations and coping with stresses that kids never had to cope with before."*

—Principal

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While academics were considered very important, these interviewees, except the principal, emphasized that academics cannot be adequately addressed if there are personal problems blocking school performance. There also was the perception that academic needs are the responsibility of teachers. In the principal's view, academics are the first and most important priority, while personal development is close behind, but she saw the two as going hand in hand. Adult focus group members specified that career needs were least important at this level, and therefore received least attention. The interviewees saw career information being provided by teachers through social studies lessons. One teacher perceived career aspects being addressed through the personal development focus on such areas as increasing self-esteem, learning self-responsibility, motivation, and communication. Students did not mention career needs, but their comments focused on personal needs. The counseling and guidance program as implemented reflects the emphasis on the personal aspects of development. The adult focus group members did not want to change this focus.

## **Emphasis in Allocating Services According to Comprehensive Model Components**

The counselor said that the two main areas of focus were guidance curriculum and responsive services. This was echoed by the principal, teachers, and students in their respective focus groups. The counselor saw individual planning and systems support as being important, but due to lack of time, she did not focus on them. Adult interviewees emphasized that these foci were correct to best serve students at this

level. All adult focus group members believed that the right amounts of time were devoted to these components (with responsive services and guidance curriculum taking about 70-75 percent of the counselors' time; see Table 3.2). Parents perceived more time being spent on systems support than did school staff. Across all components, staff were in basic agreement about percentages of time spent on each component. Interviewees' estimated percentages of time spent were generally in the ranges recommended in the TEA Comprehensive Model for elementary schools.

In comparing respondents' perceptions of percentages of time they would ideally like spent on each component, versus estimated time currently spent, their percentages changed very little, especially for staff. Parents wanted a 20 percent decrease in responsive services and a 10 percent increase in system support. The parents' ideal times also were generally within TEA Comprehensive Model-recommended ranges.

Staff interviewed emphasized their strong support for the TEA Comprehensive Model as a key building block of their program. No one expressed a belief that adoption of the model would increase the burden on the counselor, although the counselor spoke of needing more resources to fully implement the model. The counselor used the TEA Comprehensive Model frequently as a resource to define the program for others and for counselor accountability measures.

### Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach

All adult participants believed that their counseling and guidance program was proactive and preventive rather than reactive and intervention-oriented. The

counselor stressed that following the TEA Comprehensive Model has helped develop a more proactive program. Due to preventive efforts, teachers in the group reported improvements in students' behavior and social skills, a decrease in crisis situations, and improved student decision making. Focus group students explained how they have used techniques taught to them by counselors to solve or prevent problems both at school and home. One parent acknowledged how she has seen positive changes in her child due to guidance lessons. In the counselor's opinion, the key to the effectiveness of preventive efforts is the reinforcement strategies used by counselors, building each year on the same skills: "I am very much a believer that the more guidance we do in there year after year, the stronger their coping skills are ... and we cut down on crisis intervention." All adult focus group members stressed that at the elementary level, the counselor's main role is prevention of problems by laying a strong foundation of skills development.

The principal felt it was hard to separate counseling and guidance as two distinct functions. The counselor saw guidance as the preventive function, including teaching social skills, coping skills, getting along with others, and listening skills; counseling occurred when a problem was identified and intervention was needed. She saw these roles as not totally separate, in that skills taught in guidance lessons may prevent and lessen problems so a counseling intervention is not needed later.

### Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model

Both principal and counselor felt that having another counselor to lower the student-to-counselor ratio to

Table 3.2 Perceived Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #3										
Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Counselor	35%	30%	45%	50%	5%	5%	10%	10%	5%	5%
Principal	35%	40%	35%	35%	20%	20%	8%	8%	2%	0%
School Staff*	30%	33%	35%	38%	17%	18%	18%	12%	0%	0%
Parents*	35%	40%	30%	10%	5%	10%	30%	40%	0%	0%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff and parent perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

250 to 1 would enable the program to serve all students in a more proactive and comprehensive way. The counselor indicated that currently she has to prioritize students in terms of severity of needs and give more attention to students with the highest risk profiles. In addition to another counselor, the counselor viewed the current local counseling budget as inadequate to implement the intent of the TEA Comprehensive Model.

According to the counselor, the district could be more active in moving toward the model by adopting a districtwide guidance curriculum through at least middle school and systematizing student transitions between schools. The principal and counselor perceived that the districtwide social worker had been helpful, but because of her limited time they could only refer students with the most severe needs. The principal would like the ESC and the district to offer training for local school board members and other community members on what a counseling and guidance program does/should do at the elementary level. The counselor concluded that, in addition to offering more inservice training specifically for counselors, she would like the ESC to be a counselor resource for examining curriculum materials.

Parents could strengthen the counseling and guidance program in several ways, according to the counselor. She would like more parent participation through their volunteering as mentors, much more contact with parents whose children are in group or individual counseling, and more parent participation in the parenting classes when offered. When asked if all social services for youth being located in one agency could help the school counseling and guidance program, adult focus group participants, especially the counselor, were very enthusiastic about the idea because it would decrease counselor time spent on referrals and increase counselor time with students.

Student focus group members made several recommendations on improving the counseling and guidance program. One student expressed that sometimes parts of the lesson were too simplistic. Students said that they would like the counselor to come to class more often so when students have immediate needs they can discuss them with the counselor in a more timely manner. Students in the group preferred more time for classroom guidance rather than for responsive services outside class. Another suggestion was to expand the number of groups so every student can be a group member. Students suggested that those who are

prejudiced, mean, or do not get along with others would benefit by seeing the counselor. Because the counselor was helpful to them, students felt others could benefit from counseling and guidance services, too.

Table 3.3 on Page 44 presents students' responses to questions about their experiences with and perceptions of their counselors. These responses indicate a general satisfaction with counselors.

## Policy Concerns

### Characteristics and Indicators of Success

Interviewees gave a range of characteristics to judge the success of a counseling and guidance program.

- Students consider the program successful if all students participate in group counseling programs and if students who need help get the help they need.
- The counselor and teachers in the focus group see a decrease in number of students in crisis situations as an indicator of success.
- Teachers interviewed mentioned student behavioral indicators that indicate success, including better personal skills; applying skills learned in all areas of their lives; making good choices; solving their own problems without adult intervention; acceptance of special education students by others; asking for help when needed; helping other students; improved self-esteem; showing respect for students and adults; and dealing more productively with their anger. Another measure of success is students' seeing the counselor as accessible, with an open door policy. A successful program reaches all students.
- Both the counselor and principal felt that a good measure of success is a student-to-counselor ratio low enough to permit all students to be adequately served by the program.
- The principal examines the following to see if the counseling and guidance program is successful and to measure success of the instructional program, in both the campus improvement plan and long range plan. She looks for (a) an increase in student attendance, test scores, and grades; (b) a reduction

in student retentions in grade level; (c) a decrease in discipline referrals and in tardiness; (d) an increase in the number of students reading on grade level; and (e) an increase in the number of students placing out of Chapter 1. She also uses teachers' reports of student improvement.

- The counselor sees a successful program as having good supportive relationships among counselors, teachers, and school administration. Less fighting on the playground and in class and a decreased need for disciplinary force show success. She also considers teacher reports of students interacting more or better with other students and parent reports of improved student behavior as measures of success. She views improved classroom management by teachers as an important indicator of success.
- Parents in the focus group judge the counseling and guidance program as successful when they see their children acting on what they learn from the counselor, and when their child talks to the counselor about problems and the parent can see how this helps his or her child.

## Messages for Policy Makers

Members of the adult focus group would like the counseling and guidance program to be adequately funded so it can fully serve all students. Students echoed the need for more counseling and guidance time. The principal would like local school boards to be more knowledgeable about the role of elementary school counselors and how they are essential to students' academic performance.

Both principal and counselor reported that the TEA Comprehensive Model could definitely promote a more proactive and systematic counseling and guidance program. Both agreed that the model would be good as a statutory requirement if funding is included to assure there are enough counselors to properly implement the program, and if there is some flexibility based on campus characteristics and needs. The counselor reported that she saw the model as being too idealistic. The counselor and principal found the TEA Comprehensive Model and Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC) helpful in planning their program. The counselor added that

**Table 3.3**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance at Campus #3**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor helps me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	8	—	1
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	2	6	1
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	8	—	1
D. understand the good things about my homework.	—	9	—
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	3	4	2
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	5	1	3
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	5	2	2
2. I am excited about the work we are doing in the guidance program	4	—	—
3. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.	8	—	1
4. I see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	1	8	—
5. The counselor is fun to be around.	8	—	1

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

using this model and the TEMPSC helped define program accountability.

### Potential Areas for Policy Attention

The following were compiled from interviewee comments, indicating possible areas in need of policy attention.

- Educate local school boards about the elementary counseling and guidance program and the TEA Comprehensive Model and their importance.
- Provide funds for a lower student-to-counselor ratio.
- Protect the counselor from being assigned non-counseling duties.
- Consider adopting the TEA Comprehensive Model for all counselors.
- Examine the TEA Comprehensive Model to see if it is realistic for all school settings, or should be modified to meet individual campus needs.
- Strengthen the ESC role in providing counselor staff development and having guidance curriculum materials for counselors to review.
- Encourage districts to provide more consistency districtwide for their counseling and guidance programs.
- Do not mandate the TEA Comprehensive Model requirements for districts or campuses if full funding is not provided.

## Elementary School: Campus 4

### Background

#### Campus Characteristics

This campus is located in a major district in a large city with higher than average district wealth. There were 334 students enrolled in kindergarten through Grade 5. Campus academic performance was rated *Acceptable* under the 1995 accountability system. Table 4.1 summarizes some characteristics of students, teachers, and counselors.

### Interview Sources

All four interviews were conducted (counselor, principal, adult focus group, and student focus group). The adult focus group included the principal, counselor, five parents, one campus curriculum coordinator, and four teachers. All members of the campus improvement team were participants. There were 10 students (all student council members) in the student focus group who were in Grades 4 or 5; five were male and five were female. Due to tape recorder difficulties, the first 20 minutes of the adult focus group interview were not recorded; site visit notes were used to summarize interviewees' comments.

**Table 4.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #4**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	48%	40%	Number of Counselor Positions	1
Hispanic	37%	3%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	None
White	6%	57%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	334:1
Other Minority	9%	0%	Number of Teachers	29
Economically Disadvantaged	93%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	12 Years
Limited English Proficient	37%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.

## Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

### Development and History on Campus

The counselor said that she has been a counselor at this school four years. Three years ago the director of the district's counseling and guidance services worked with district counselors to establish a districtwide counseling and guidance program with a mission, timelines, curriculum guides, and the curriculum itself. The counselors prepared the curriculum over one summer. The program is based on the TEA Comprehensive Model. Each grade level has a separate guidance curriculum, and the four components of the TEA Comprehensive Model are addressed in each. The counselor stressed that these changes were made to assure consistent counseling and guidance programs as students moved from elementary to middle to high school and if they changed schools. Before develop-

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*“Sometimes parents do expect therapy . . . Sometimes their expectations are high. They want you to cure their child.”*

—Counselor

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ment of this program, each counselor planned and conducted his or her own program. At the time the TEA Comprehensive Model was adopted, the counseling and guidance director also decided that all district counselors would follow the requirements for grant counselors (those funded by TEA for elementary campuses with large numbers of students at risk), regardless of funding source. These requirements center around implementing the TEA Comprehensive Model and include specific reporting provisions.

### Goals and Expectations

The counseling and guidance program mission and philosophy were developed at the district level with participation of all counselors and a representative group of administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders, as reported by the counselor involved in the process. In her judgment, the elementary school counseling and guidance philosophy is to ensure that every student who attends this elementary school receives guidance that leads to success in life.

In the principal's opinion, the philosophy of the counseling and guidance program is to address educational, social, personal, and career needs of students and build students' self-esteem. The large majority of students at this campus are economically disadvantaged. The principal noted, based on her 35 years of experience in education, that students from high poverty areas generally have low self-esteem.

In the student focus group, students recited the school motto: “You can make it if you try.”

Members of the adult focus group offered their interpretations of the mission of the counseling and guidance program. Parents in the group commented that the counselor was available to them and gave them ideas on how to deal with their children's problems. These parents thought that the counselor helped students through small groups, that she and teachers involved students, and that she was there for students and they felt comfortable talking to her. The counselor was viewed as guiding each child in ways (such as building self-esteem and encouraging proper behavior) that help parents instill good manners. One parent found the adult friends mentoring program helpful to students, and she liked parent meetings where parents could talk freely in small groups.

School staff in the group perceived that the counseling and guidance mission is to build students' self-esteem, help students function in a school environment, and help them work through their problems. The counselor was seen as working with students, parents, and teachers. A teacher specified that the counselor really motivated students and spoke of students really liking the small counseling groups. The counselor offers the student-of-the-week program, works with parents on test-taking strategies to use with their children at home, and conducts meetings for parents. One teacher said that the counselor works with students individually and builds rapport with them and, in her opinion, has given students in the English as a second language (ESL) program self-confidence. Another staff member spoke of the counselor allowing all students to participate in all the programs and assemblies that she plans.

Primary expectations that guide the counseling and guidance program and counselor are following the TEA Comprehensive Model and using guidelines, timelines, and curriculum that were developed by and for counselors districtwide. Expectations of staff interviewed focused on their experiences in working

with the counselor. Staff expects the counselor to implement the counseling and guidance program prescribed by the district. The principal expects a strong focus on building students' self-esteem. Teachers in the group counted on the counselor to conduct guidance lessons and to help students they refer.

The counselor responded that parents expect her to enhance their children's skills so children can be productive citizens. She pointed out that some parents expect her to counsel them: "I always tell them I'm not a therapist; I can refer you to an agency. Sometimes parents do expect therapy ... so sometimes I think they leave out the word guidance [with] counselor ... Sometimes their expectations are high. They want you to 'cure' their child." She explains to parents that her focus is teaching a developmental guidance curriculum to all students.

The counselor indicated that many community members do not know there are elementary school counselors because of the relative newness of counselors at this level in this district. The principal commented that community members do not know what elementary counselors do; they are used to what secondary counselors do and may expect the same from elementary counselors. The principal was not sure what community members expect: "I would think that if some kids from the school would go out into the community and cause problems that the community would expect that the counselor would be trying to help these kids to realize that they should not be doing these things." One teacher in the adult focus group added, "The community expects for the counselor to help give guidance so that when the student goes into the real world that student can function productively as an individual."

## **Campus Implementation**

The counselor described spending the majority of her time on conducting guidance lessons. She divides each class into two groups and teaches each group a 30-minute guidance lesson each week. The student groups come to the counselor's office for lessons, except kindergarten students, who are taught in their classroom. The curriculum addresses self-concept, self-understanding, study and social skills, personal safety, drug education, decision making, stress reduction, making transitions, cross-cultural appreciation, communication, and career options. On Fridays she individually counsels 25 students. On a weekly basis

she also meets with three small groups of students. The first group is for boys who are at risk, who generally have no male role models at home. She tries to bring in male role models from the community to whom these boys can relate. The second group is for girls with low self-esteem and poor self-image. The counselor works on grooming skills and other areas to help the girls feel better about themselves. The third group is for students who have incomplete work or can't seem to settle down. She works with them to identify the problems and find solutions. In the past, she also has had groups for shy and withdrawn children.

The counselor participates in a wide range of other activities. She has organized and conducted anti-drug and alcohol, positive attitude, and TAAS rallies for the whole school. She seeks out adult mentors for students who are at risk or need some personal attention. She brings in community speakers for parent meetings; is the school's test coordinator and conducts all testing activities; and sponsors a drug prevention program for all fifth graders to promote anti-drug and positive attitudes, as well as a similar program for all fourth graders. She serves as a referral source for parents. She sponsors programs such as student of the week and good attendance recognition. The counselor attends monthly districtwide counselor meetings. The principal explained that the counselor helps conduct an enrichment program in the afternoon that has an academic focus. It also emphasizes building self-esteem, personal pride, helping students do their best, and clarifying students' thoughts. The principal commented that the counselor told her that this interfered with her counseling and guidance duties to some extent, although the counselor did not mention this.

All adult focus group members praised the counselor and the counseling and guidance program and believed all students were well served. Students in the student focus group were very pleased with their contacts with the counselor. Teachers in the adult focus group reported excellent access to the counselor. Parents in the group were very positive about the counselor and services offered. Both the principal and counselor stated that the TEA Comprehensive Model and Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC) statements regarding roles and responsibilities of a counselor define the counselor's role on this campus. The counselor explained that she has expanded these roles by developing other programs, such as programs to increase parental involvement, and

she engages in these “extra efforts” to help the students. In her overall opinion, the principal is protective of her roles and responsibilities.

The counselor spoke of conducting an annual needs assessment of students’ counseling and guidance needs by getting written input from administrators, teachers, and parents. The parent needs assessment form is distributed to PTA members and school volunteers and is sent home to each parent. Forms used were developed by counselors districtwide. The counselor reported a good response from parents. In addition to the written needs assessment, teachers refer students who need individual or group counseling. The counselor spoke of always being open for input and has a box where teachers can put notes about students or ideas for the counseling and guidance program. The principal also completes a written needs assessment form and may refer students who are having problems, such as divorce or death in the family.

One teacher in the adult focus group complimented the counselor’s doing an excellent job of following up with students. “It’s just amazing how she can remember .... There is one person, and she follows up on whatever the problem was and ... if she can’t be there, she will get them the special friend so that special friend can fill in for her. But then she still touches bases .... She still knows what’s going on with that child.” The principal mentioned that every six weeks she identifies students who are not doing well on their report cards, and she and the counselor review test data to identify students who may need extra help. The counselor then works with the identified students during their weekly guidance lesson, as well as with the teacher to find solutions.

There is one full-time counselor at this campus for about 350 students. Both principal and counselor believed that this student-to-counselor ratio is about right. They remarked that no secretarial help is assigned directly to the counseling and guidance program. The principal added that the counselor has access to the school secretary. The counselor said that she generally took required paperwork home to complete because she did not have time or secretarial help at school.

The counselor’s office is located in a portable structure outside the main building, but during the previous three years, she had been inside the building. She was

moved when additional students were reassigned to this campus, and her space inside was needed for these students. Her office has no phone, so she has to go inside to make calls. Currently, the school secretary takes messages for her, and the counselor goes into the building frequently to check her messages. She also shares her office area with another staff member.

Both counselor and principal commented that the program has a wide range of materials such as videotapes and films, puppets, and other curriculum materials. The counselor has a VCR, but does not have a computer in her office. Although the program has a small budget, the counselor pointed out that she has been able to buy whatever materials she needs. The principal confirmed that the counseling and guidance budget is small, but if the counselor needs something, she finds money from other sources because, she emphasized, it is important for the counselor to have what she needs.

Because this was the principal’s first year as a principal, she had no experience in hiring a counselor, and the current counselor was here when she started the year. The counselor was a teacher in the district before she became a counselor. She applied four times for a counseling position and acknowledged there were many applicants each time. The principal said that she and the campus leadership team would consider teachers for a counselor position. The ideal counselor, according to the principal, can relate well to children. The children have faith in her and feel they can talk to her and get results. It is also important for the counselor to work well with teachers and administrators. She should be well-rounded, very aware of what’s happening at school, at home, and in the community, and be able to think on her feet quickly.

The principal and counselor agreed that the counseling and guidance program is high quality because of strong district involvement. Had the former director of counseling and guidance not adopted the TEA Comprehensive Model for all district counselors, the school’s program would not be this strong. The former director also established a district library for counselors, where curriculum materials and videotapes can be checked out, which the counselor reported using frequently. She indicated that this year the Education Service Center (ESC) offered staff development sessions on discipline, crisis intervention, and self-esteem. She attended the session on discipline

and thought it was “great.” She specified checking out ESC materials, especially videotapes, frequently.

This was the first year that the counselor or principal had experience with the transition of students from elementary to middle school, and they added that fifth graders were currently (on the day of the interviews) at the middle school for orientation. In two days the middle school counselor was scheduled to come to this campus for preregistration of students who would be going to middle school. The principal added that this counselor talks with students about changes they will experience, such as changing classes and taking electives.

From the counselor’s perspective, parental involvement is presently low, with only 20 parents having participated in various programs. She spoke of encouraging parent involvement in several ways: she conducts a written needs assessment annually; she has instituted a counselor-parent forum, where parents can discuss issues with her; and she arranges several parent meetings where community speakers, such as psychiatrists, talk about children’s behavior and where parents can talk to each other in small groups. Parents are also invited to school on days such as Grandparent Day or for other events (such as drug prevention rallies) involving both children and their families.

Although the school is in a very poor, high crime neighborhood, the community seems to respect the school in that there is no vandalism or graffiti on school property, according to the principal. She stated that community organizations and businesses, such as the bank, help by providing money for T-shirts, field trips, and other needs. She also pointed out several ways the community is involved with the counseling and guidance program: speakers for parent meetings and rallies; police department involvement in the drug-prevention programs; and information from local hospitals, psychologists, psychiatrists, and community organizations about services offered. This involvement has been very helpful, in her opinion, because she now knows where to refer parents/students for various needs.

### **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

#### **Areas Prompting Need for Change**

The 1994-95 addition of Grades 4 and 5 to the school has changed program needs, in the counselor’s judg-

ment. The older students have more problems and therefore a stronger need for both group and individual counseling than she can always provide immediately. The principal concurred that older students need more counseling services, primarily due to “their jumping hormones.” By 1997, a new school wing will be added, and another 250 students will attend this campus. According to the principal, almost all the new students will come from economically disadvantaged homes and high crime neighborhoods. Both principal and counselor believed that another counselor will be needed to handle the additional students. The counselor perceived that students today have more needs, more than teachers alone can handle, including more social service and counseling needs. She stressed that many parents today have high expectations of the counseling and guidance program. The principal agreed that student needs have increased, as indicated by more family problems including sexual, emotional, and physical abuse.

As already noted, the counselor has no telephone and her office is located in a portable building that she shares with another staff member. She also has no secretarial help to complete required counseling paperwork. Spending the three previous years inside the school building versus being in a portable building this year, the counselor felt she was not as visible to students. To her, this visibility is important to being effective. Instead, the school secretary takes messages for her, which the counselor has to check frequently. In her opinion, this lessens her availability to parents when they call and need something immediately because she has to call them back. Also, she does not have the privacy needed when talking to parents or others about sensitive matters. Another privacy issue for the counselor concerns her shared office space. The coming and going of her office mate can be disruptive or distracting for students. She also prefers privacy so students will feel totally free in talking to her with no one else around. The principal explained that in the new school addition to be completed in 1997, the counselor will be in the main building with a private office and telephone.

### **Emphasis in Meeting Students’ Academic, Personal, and Career Needs**

The counselor, principal, staff, and parent interviewees all agreed that the counseling and guidance program addresses the three major areas of student needs. All adult focus group members concurred that career development received least emphasis, and this was

appropriate at the elementary level. Both principal and counselor viewed academics to be stressed most. The counselor said, "We're working on making the children be more aware and putting education as a priority because we're trying to stop the dropout rate .... The second thing of importance ... is personal growth because the children are faced with so many distractions out there, and we want them to feel good and know how to make good choices." The principal shared her views.

Parents and most teachers in the adult focus group saw academics and personal development as equally important. One parent said, "I feel like she's [the

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*"I feel like she's [the counselor] always tried to get the kids to realize that they are somebody . . . She always had them talk about their dreams, their goals."*

—Parent

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counselor] always tried to get the kids to realize that they were somebody ... She always had them talk about their dreams, their goals. And as far as academics, she's behind them 100 percent." One primary grade level teacher perceived that personal development was most addressed and that this was appropriate for her young students.

Because all three need areas are covered in the TEA Comprehensive Model and in the curriculum, adult participants concluded that all three are addressed in the counseling and guidance program. Adult focus group members were satisfied with this balance and perceived it to be appropriate for elementary students.

In the student focus group, students' remarks centered on working with the counselor on both academic and personal concerns. The principal noted that career counseling was not a top priority, but it was important for students to be made aware of different opportunities. This has been accomplished through career days, guest speakers, and community volunteers.

### Emphasis in Allocating Services According to the Comprehensive Model Components

The counselor emphasized that all district counselors followed the required district percentages of time for counseling and guidance services. These percentages are based on recommendations in the TEA Comprehensive Model. The percentages she reported were 50 percent for guidance curriculum, 30 percent for responsive services, and 10 percent each for individual planning and system support (see Table 4.2). The principal saw about 20 percent more time being spent on guidance curriculum than did the counselor, while parents perceived about 20 percent less. School staff in the group thought that less time was being spent on responsive services than did other participants, and more time was spent on individual planning and system support than was indicated by the principal and counselor.

Under ideal circumstances, the counselor would decrease time spent on the guidance curriculum to add time for responsive services. She explained that currently there are so many students who want to talk to her individually that she has to tell some students to come back at another time. The principal's perceptions of current and ideal times spent on the model's components were the same. School staff changed their percentages only slightly from what they perceived about current time spent versus the ideal. One teacher preferred increased time spent on guidance

**Table 4.2**  
**Perceived Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #4**

Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Counselor	50%	40%	30%	40%	10%	10%	10%	10%	0%	0%
Principal	70%	70%	20%	20%	4%	4%	5%	5%	1%	1%
School Staff*	50%	51%	19%	23%	17%	16%	13%	8%	0%	0%
Parents*	30%	40%	35%	30%	25%	20%	10%	10%	0%	0%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff and parent perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

curriculum. "If more of the time is spent on those kinds of things [guidance], for example, motivation to achieve, then there is less time you have to spend on behavioral problems at school and the other interpersonal immediate concerns of students." Parents in the group preferred increased time spent on guidance curriculum and slightly decreased time spent on responsive services. The counselor's current and ideal percentages of time spent were within ranges recommended by the TEA Comprehensive Model, with the exception of the current percentage of time spent on guidance curriculum being slightly above the recommended averages.

### **Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach**

The counselor stressed that using the TEA Comprehensive Model for the counseling and guidance program definitely made their program both comprehensive and preventive. She estimated the current balance of counseling and guidance services to be 70 percent prevention and 30 percent intervention. In addition to guidance curriculum, other preventive activities include drug prevention rallies and programs, self-image programs, self-esteem rallies, and rallies for success on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. The campus improvement committee also works on prevention activities, according to the counselor. She reported more activities to bring parents into school to learn why school is important and what they can do at home to reinforce these efforts. All adult focus group participants agreed that at the elementary level a preventive focus was essential. The principal and one parent emphasized that if preventive activities are done at the elementary level, there should be fewer interventions needed at the secondary level.

Ideally, the counselor would add even more prevention activities. The counselor spoke of achieving some success in that she had a large number of referrals of students for individual counseling from teachers before the guidance and prevention program was initiated. With the program in place for three years, she has seen the number of teacher referrals of students decrease considerably. She also feels the program is working because she sees children eager to see her and interested in coming to school, and TAAS reading scores improved over the past year.

### **Factors Relevant to the Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

Both principal and counselor want to add a second counselor because of the anticipated increase in student enrollment next year. The principal and counselor had different ideas for a two-counselor program. The principal preferred one counselor dedicated to prekindergarten through Grade 2 and one counselor for Grades 3, 4, and 5. The main goal of the primary grade level counselor would be preventive—that is, addressing issues before they become problems. The counselor for Grades 3-5 would focus on issues more pertinent to older students, such as relationships between boys and girls. In contrast, the counselor suggested one counselor for teaching guidance curriculum to all grades and the other for conducting individual and group counseling. She believed this would allow all students to receive guidance, and those who have problems could get the more individualized attention they need. The counselor indicated a current need for secretarial help, and both she and the principal said that if another counselor is added that secretarial help would be essential. The principal also wants the counselor to have a computer.

One factor that both principal and counselor mentioned was needing another strong supporter of the TEA Comprehensive Model and an advocate for elementary counselors to fill the vacant district position of director of counseling and guidance. The counselor suggested that the district expand community knowledge of the elementary counseling and guidance program by providing a school bulletin on services offered and conducting other activities during Counselor's Week to increase overall awareness of the elementary program.

Both the principal and counselor concluded the school needed a parent facilitator to work with the community and parents, to help families find needed services (serving a social work function), to bring resources into the school to help students, and to get parents more involved with school and their children's education. The principal stated that she had already requested a parent facilitator for next year. With the anticipated increase in student enrollment, she prefers two parent facilitators.

The counselor and principal want to increase parent involvement in the counseling and guidance program.

The counselor affirmed that she will continue activities such as conducting parent meetings, inviting guest speakers, and holding rallies, as well as exploring new ideas to get more parents involved with their children's education. The principal and counselor explained that the parent facilitator would focus on helping parents and involving them much more in school activities and in the counseling and guidance program.

All adult focus group members concurred that more community involvement was essential to enable the counseling and guidance program to become even more preventive. The principal and counselor suggested brochures and newspaper articles to help the community become more aware of the elementary counseling and guidance services offered. The counselor wanted community organizations to continue to send information on services offered and to provide volunteer speakers. She believed if all social services for children were combined into one service agency that time would be saved in getting students and families needed services. The principal emphasized

that the community should be more vocal about benefits of the counseling and guidance program. The counselor saw a critical need for more community support for mentoring activities and volunteering at school. She stressed the strong need for male mentors, especially African American males. A teacher in the adult focus group also expressed great concern: "I think we need mentor programs on our campuses so desperately. I've done flyers for several different ones but they have never materialized. ... I think we need positive Black male role models in these schools and we're not going to be able to get it until community leaders ... [become more involved.]"

Mainly through their classroom guidance lessons, all student focus group participants specified a number of contacts with the counselor. As shown in Table 4.3, these students were very positive about the counselor and how she had helped them. More specifically, comments indicated that the counselor had taught how working hard in school now can help you later. As one student said, "If ... [you do] your homework, you keep on passing and then you can graduate." Another

**Table 4.3**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance**  
**at Campus #4**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor helps me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	9	—	1
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	9	—	1
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	10	—	—
D. understand the good things about my homework.	8	—	2
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	8	—	2
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	10	—	—
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	8	1	1
2. I am excited about the work we are doing in the guidance program	9	1	—
3. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.	9	—	1
4. I see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	1	9	—
5. The counselor is fun to be around.	8	—	2

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

student said, “She would say if you keep learning, then you can grow up and be somebody.” In addition to academic issues, responses reflected the counselor helping with personal issues. For example, one student commented, “She helped me and my friend get back to being friends.” A second student stated, “She [the counselor] makes us be proud of ourselves.” Students emphasized receiving counseling and guidance help on issues such as self-esteem, positive self-image, respect for teachers and parents, the importance of education, the need to do homework daily, and staying out of trouble and getting along with other students. Students also stressed that the counselor was always there for them and for anyone who needed her help.

## Policy Concerns

### Characteristics and Indicators of Success

Adult focus group members had a number of ideas for indicators of success in a counseling and guidance program.

- All interviewees see all students feeling comfortable going to the counselor, seeing her as a friend, and believing in her and respecting her, as signs of success.
- The counselor and teacher participants expressed that, in a program that is working, students are eager to participate in guidance lessons and to see the counselor; share with others (parents, students, and teachers) what they have learned in the counseling and guidance program; and feel good about themselves.
- To the principal and teachers in the focus group, success is all students knowing the counselor and the counselor knowing all students; teachers feeling comfortable referring students to the counselor because they know they will get results; and being able to see successful results with students.
- Participating teachers related that success includes a positive school climate with students who have positive attitudes. The students know they will receive the help they need because there is an open door policy for students to come individually to talk with the counselor.

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*“She [the counselor] makes us be proud of ourselves.”*

—Student

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- Success for the counselor means students who are eager to come to school; students with improved school attendance and improved TAAS scores and grades; a counselor who is a positive person and a good role model; and former students who give positive feedback about their participation in the program.
- The principal added that in a successful counseling and guidance program there is a good balance between prevention and intervention activities with a focus on prevention; parents feel comfortable coming to see the counselor; and students’ self-esteem improves.

### Messages for Policy Makers

The principal stressed that the public needs to know that counseling and guidance services in the elementary school are “very important. It is really needed; it is needed even more now than ... it has ever been needed. They also need to know that the guidance program is much different in elementary than it is in secondary [school] ... where they serve more as assistant principals.” In her judgment, this school’s program needs strong support because today’s students need counseling and guidance services at the early grade levels.

Both principal and counselor strongly encourage policy makers to mandate the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC for all counselors statewide. In their view, these requirements give strong focus to the counselor’s job responsibilities; promote a comprehensive, preventive program; provide consistency districtwide in services offered; protect the counselor from non-counseling duties; and strengthen the counselor’s professional identity. The counselor firmly believed that this prevention model had brought positive changes in students’ behavior at this school.

According to the counselor, policy makers should publicize the need for elementary counselors. She said, "Sometimes the elementary counselors feel that if there are any cuts, they [district administrators and

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*"If you cut out the elementary counselor program . . . you'll find out that even more problems are going to occur."*

—Counselor

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policy makers] would cut the elementary counselors, and this is what is really needed. We are the focal point. We're the one .... We catch them early, and I think if you cut out the elementary counselor program, ... you'll find out that even more problems are going to occur. The policy makers need to believe in their own people. They need to make sure that we get that support."

## Potential Areas for Policy Attention

The following potential areas for policy attention were identified from the interviews.

- Offer more in-service training at the Education Service Centers designed specifically for counselors, including having TEA or other state staff update counselors on what is happening statewide that affects school counselors.
- Promote the importance of and need for parental and community involvement in school counseling and guidance programs.
- Adopt the TEA Comprehensive Model and requirements for TEA-funded grant counselors for all counselors statewide.
- Gather more input from counselors working in schools before policy decisions are made.
- Widely publicize what elementary school counseling and guidance programs do and the services they offer.

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## CHAPTER 4

# Middle/Junior High School Case Studies

## Summary

### Characteristics of Campuses Selected

All of the middle school campuses in the study served Grades 7 and 8; most also served Grade 6, and one served Grade 5. The campuses had from one to three counselors. The six campuses were located in major urban, major suburban, other central city, and non-metropolitan stable districts. Enrollment ranged from 326 to 1,640 students. On the statewide accountability system for 1995, four received ratings of *Acceptable*, and two received ratings of *Low Performing*. The percent of economically disadvantaged students varied from 23 percent to 58 percent across the six campuses. The ethnic composition of students ranged from 1 percent to 42 percent African American; 9 percent to 37 percent Hispanic; 32 percent to 72 percent White; and 0 percent to 11 percent other minorities. The following summary provides an overview of the six middle school campuses. Two of the six case studies follow this summary.

### Middle School Counseling and Guidance Programs

#### Goals and Expectations

As described by participants, the campus counseling and guidance missions at all six middle school campuses centered on meeting students' educational, academic, social, emotional, and other needs, and preparing them for success now and in the future. At three of the six campuses there was a districtwide counseling and guidance mission upon which the campus mission was based. At another campus the counseling and guidance mission was developed by the campus leadership team. No description was given at the other two sites on how the mission was developed. At all six campuses, the reported program and counselor expectations centered around community or

parent expectations. However, those expectations often were not based on an accurate understanding of the counselor's role. As a result, some parents and community members expected the counselor to solve any and all students' problems, even those at home. Several principals and one teacher expressed their expectations of the counselor and counseling and guidance program, which included providing a planned and cohesive program, serving all students and being readily available to students, placing students in the right classes, and following the roles and responsibilities of counselors presented in the TEA Comprehensive Model.

#### Campus Implementation

While the duties and responsibilities reported by counselors varied across the six campuses, there were many areas of similarity. All six counselors interviewed indicated they conducted individual counseling sessions with students, most frequently based on crises in students' lives. Four of the six indicated that the time available for these sessions was more limited than they would like due to other duties. Three of the six counselors reported that one or more counselors on their campus conducted group counseling sessions and some classroom guidance activities. These included groups for students with specific needs such as low self-esteem and grief, as well as groups that covered topics of interest to all students such as study skills, organizational skills, stress management, and cultural differences. Classroom topics for eighth grade students often focused on career and high school planning.

All six counselors reported considerable involvement in transition activities for students who would be entering their schools in the fall and for their students who would be entering a high school in the fall. The activities to prepare the younger students for transition

usually involve counselors visiting each feeder school to meet with students about what to expect at middle school, including such things as scheduling, electives, and rules. The number of schools visited varied from 1 to 11 feeder campuses. Counselors generally work with the elementary school counselors to develop a schedule for each student that best fits his or her needs. Counselors also arrange and conduct orientation programs for incoming students and their parents. All six also were involved in activities for the transition of eighth graders to high school that included working with the high school counselors on planning a high school course plan for each eighth grader (usually the high school counselors come to the middle school) and coordinating visits of students to the high school they will be attending.

At five of the campuses the counselors were responsible for the campus testing program. This always included administration and coordination of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and some form of vocational testing. For several counselors it also included administration and coordination of the district-mandated norm-referenced testing program, or conducting testing for students in the bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) programs, and testing students for placement into the gifted and talented program. Not only did these duties require a great deal of the counselors' time, but also necessitated a great deal of paperwork and completion of clerical tasks such as counting the TAAS booklets.

Counselors also reported being responsible for a variety of programs. At all six campuses the special education programs were identified as being particularly time consuming, and paperwork intensive. Other programs or activities for which several counselors were responsible include (a) the bilingual and ESL programs, (b) gifted and talented program, (c) programs for students at risk, (d) serving as members of the campus team that handled the referrals of students to the at-risk program, (e) serving on the team that handled student crises and the referral of students to the appropriate community resources, (f) serving on the campus leadership team, or (g) serving on the campus student support team. Five of the counselors also reported coordinating one or more mentoring programs.

Five of the six counselors reported being responsible for scheduling students into courses and making schedule changes throughout the year as needed. The scheduling process usually involved consulting with

both teachers and students before scheduling occurred. At one campus the counselor also built the campus master schedule. All involved reported that this process was very time intensive and required a great deal of clerical work. Three of the counselors indicated that they were also responsible for registration, preregistration, and student enrollment, which required much time and paperwork. Even where there was some clerical help available, counselors involved still indicated they did much of the clerical work and/or data entry themselves.

At all six campuses, counselors reported one or more additional activities that involved calling and/or meeting with students, parents, teachers, and the community. All counselors reported meeting with teachers frequently, both formally and informally. All counselors also reported meeting with a parent when requested, as well as frequently making phone contacts with parents. Other parent contacts included conducting parenting skills classes, orientation and career nights, tutoring parents, working closely with the PTA to find resources for parents, and monthly parent night meetings. Counselors also contacted parents or met with parents and students each six weeks to discuss student progress or failing grades. Other than mentoring contacts, all counselors reported making ongoing contacts with various community agencies and organizations to seek resources for students and families in need of outside services, and introducing students to career opportunities. Other duties that at least one counselor reported performing include supervising clerical help and parent volunteers; making arrangements for site visits and monitoring visits; coordinating summer school programs; substitute teaching; and cafeteria, hall, or bus duty.

At all six campuses, students, administrators, staff, parents, and community representatives expressed strong support for their counselors and the importance of the counseling and guidance program to a successful school process. All expressed that each counselor was working hard, doing a wonderful job, and doing as much as was humanly possible. Across participants and campuses, middle/junior high school counselors were seen as having too heavy a workload, a student-to-counselor ratio that was too high, and too many duties and responsibilities (many of which were judged to be non-counseling/guidance tasks) with too much paperwork and other clerical tasks. Participants, including principals, felt that counselors were being asked to do and were doing tasks that were not appropriate for counselors.

Counselors were positive about the TEA Comprehensive Model as giving a clear definition of the counselor's roles and responsibilities, and saw implementation of the model as a way to reduce or eliminate duties they did not feel should be part of their jobs. One counselor reported that the model's adoption had eliminated her scheduling tasks; another noted the positive impact the model had had on the district elementary counseling and guidance program.

At all six campuses, counselors reported that students are referred for counseling services by counselors, teachers, administrators, parents, and students themselves. Counselors also use their daily contacts with students at registration, in the halls and cafeteria, and in classes and groups to informally check on students' needs. The needs of students receiving special education services are determined and updated in the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) process. All counselors reported frequent contacts with teachers to check on students' needs. At one campus, the counselor stayed with the same students for two years and felt this helped her be more cognizant of students' needs. Counselors conducted vocational or occupational assessment with eighth grade students to identify possible vocational or occupational areas of interest and advise students accordingly. The majority of the counselors had a database of student information that they accessed to check students' progress.

Two counselors evaluated student progress at the end of every six-week grading period. One counselor conducted a written needs assessment of teachers and students at the beginning of the school year and used this information when planning the counseling and guidance services to be offered, such as what small group counseling sessions to offer. Other techniques one or more counselors reported using included reviewing student folders, special education information, and teachers' input to identify incoming sixth graders with problems so individual or group counseling could be planned accordingly; attending parent/teacher conferences; and checking with students during group sessions or during daily informal contacts.

The resources of the six programs included a clerk or secretary assigned to assist the counseling and guidance program at least part-time. Only at the largest campus were there any other counseling and guidance program staff members; at this campus there was a part-time psychological associate. At four campuses each counselor had his or her own personal computer.

All six counselors reported having a wide variety of materials, including books, pamphlets, videotapes, and software, covering areas of interest to this age student, such as career exploration and life skills. Most reported that they were able to get the materials and videotapes they wanted through their counseling and guidance budget or other funds their principals made available to them. The student-to-counselor ratios reported in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) for 1994-95 varied from 288 to 1 (3 counselors), 326 to 1 (1 counselor), 461 to 1 (2 counselors), 480 to 1 (2 counselors), 493 to 1 (2 counselors), up to 547 to 1 (3 counselors). At the campus where the ratio was 493 to 1, the counselor felt that the actual ratio was 986 to 1 because the second counselor had been out all year with a serious illness.

The amount of district involvement with the counseling and guidance programs varied considerably across the six campuses. Counselors on three of the campuses reported there was a districtwide counseling and guidance program with a director of counseling and guidance. In two of these districts the TEA Comprehensive Model was the basis for the programs. Counselors on the other campuses took advantage of other districtwide programs such as health services for eligible students, a mentoring program, and a drug awareness program. At one of the six campuses, the counselor reported using resources at the regional Education Service Center (ESC).

Several school campuses reported low parental involvement in the counseling and guidance program, while others reported low levels of involvement from certain groups of parents. Factors that were thought to contribute to low parental involvement included high family mobility; very isolated families without phones or transportation; parents with little education, reading problems, or learning disabilities; parents with negative attitudes about school based on their own past experiences; parents who did not speak English; and families in which both parents worked. The counselors conducted a variety of activities such as working with the PTA; holding evening orientation programs, or offering parenting classes or seminars, including evenings and weekends; holding open houses or inviting parents to the school for lunch; offering evening family counseling sessions or tutoring for parents attending community school classes; and contacting parents by telephone to discuss student grades or discipline problems.

On most of these campuses, a wide variety of community resources were used in the counseling and guidance program. For one campus the school district was the only organization in a very poor community. When students and/or their families needed services outside the scope of the school counseling and guidance program, the other five counselors reported community options that were available. Counselors refer families to local health clinics or the county health department, or to psychologists, psychiatrists, or a local psychiatric hospital. They also use private organizations such as the American Red Cross, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Planned Parenthood; state agencies such as Department of Human Services and Protective and Regulatory Services; services provided through local universities and military bases; and local shelters and legal services. The director of the Communities in Schools program on one middle school campus is a social worker who works intensively with small groups of students who have serious problems; program staff also make home visits and refer families to community resources through the counselor. Where there were community resources, the counselors reported business partnerships where adults spoke about various careers or sponsored students working in local businesses and mentoring programs where adults were paired with students in need.

### **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

#### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

The counselors, principals, and other adults interviewed at all six campuses strongly agreed that changes in society have greatly affected the role of counseling and guidance. Problems today that directly affect students were seen to be both quantitatively and qualitatively more significant than in the past, and these problems were seen as continuing to increase. In one counselor's opinion, many students today do not have the maturity to deal with the situations they are put in. The problems they discussed included an increase in gang involvement; dysfunctional families; child abuse; an increased number of latch key children; students affected by their own or their family's substance abuse problems; more student pregnancy; an increased number of students being affected directly by crime or violence; and an increased number of students who lack needed personal and social skills usually taught at home. Respondents believed that

these have greatly increased the need for strong counseling and guidance programs.

Students and adults alike felt that students who were identified as part of some group (gifted and talented, at risk, or special education), and students who sought counseling and guidance, were the ones most likely to receive services. The average students, without identified problems, who remain unobtrusive and are not in crisis, are seen by participants as the primary group who needs more counseling and guidance services made available to them. Students, counselors, principals, and teachers mentioned other broader needs they felt were not being addressed adequately enough, such as more attention to students' personal needs. All suggestions made to meet these needs revolved around both having more counselors and relieving counselors of paperwork and other duties not related to direct provision of student services. Suggested uses for this additional counselor time included conducting classroom guidance lessons, outreach activities to students reticent to seek help, and follow-up with students who had previously received services.

At all six campuses, additional staff for the counseling and guidance program were desired. The majority wanted to add more counselors to lower the student-to-counselor ratio to what they considered a more desirable level. Two counselors wanted to hire male and minority counselors. Others wanted counselors specialized in areas, such as special education and ESL. Additional support staff also were needed at most campuses, including clerical support, a registrar and other paraprofessional support, and a social worker. These additional support staff were seen as the primary way to relieve counselors of paperwork and administrative duties. Other than requesting additional counselors, support staff, and clerical help, the counselors and principals interviewed wanted few additional items that would involve budgetary increases. The non-staff needs most commonly identified were computer equipment, including equipment and software for student use; and larger collections of videotapes, with better viewing equipment and facilities.

Participants, including students at all six campuses, indicated their campus counselors performed more than one duty they considered to be a non-counseling/guidance duty. Five of the six counselors interviewed handled the process of scheduling students into classes and making schedule changes. Five of the six counse-

lors were responsible for administering the TAAS testing program. Counselors at all six campuses were involved and in some cases responsible for their campus special education program. The majority of counselors and school staff felt that not only did the counselors have non-counseling/guidance duties and excessive paperwork, but they had too many duties to handle or were responsible for too many programs. All counselors expressed frustration over these duties because they felt student needs were so great that counselors needed to spend even more time working directly with students than they had available. All the middle school counselors worked extra hours to try and do everything. Most indicated that they did their paperwork after hours or at home to optimize the time available to students and staff.

When school staff were asked what their districts could do to help the counseling and guidance program be more successful, most suggestions involved providing more districtwide consistency to the counseling and guidance program. Many of the counselors and principals interviewed thought ESCs could improve the services offered for counselors by providing more resources and training for counselors and by serving as liaisons to educate business and the local community about the needs of the counseling and guidance program, including centralized access to all social services for children in one agency, and encouraging greater business and community support.

Participants at all six campuses wanted to increase the involvement of parents and the community as a whole in the counseling and guidance program. The five campuses with community resources all supported the idea of having all community resources for children coordinated so they could be accessed through one location. The counseling and guidance program needed to be responsive to parents' needs, and all six campuses planned to continue offering a variety of programs for parents. Strong parental involvement was seen as essential in a successful counseling and guidance program. Participants saw a need to educate parents and the community about what school counseling and guidance programs are, what counselors' roles and responsibilities are and are not, and how the community can be involved in both the program and the school. Participants indicated one of the main contributions the community could make was provide more mentors for students in need, including males, females, and adults from all ethnic groups. The community could also help by providing more resources to help students. This could be in the form of

local mental health organizations having a stronger alliance with local school counselors and having more community services and resources to deal with problems students are facing, such as drug and alcohol addiction, pregnancy, gangs, psychological problems, and dropping out. What counselors also wanted were community resources used to educate students so problems in these areas would be less likely to occur. Because she is seeing an increasing number of dysfunctional families, one counselor felt the community could help by providing more parenting skills classes. As one counselor said, "A school's counseling program is no better than the support it gets from the community."

Many interviewees saw students' academic, personal, and career needs as intertwined and felt that all three areas were addressed in the counseling and guidance program. At most campuses, both students and adults saw the most emphasis on meeting students' personal and academic needs; at all campuses it was agreed that students' career needs were addressed the least. All the adult interviewees wanted to increase the time devoted to meeting students' needs in all three areas, but felt this could not be done until there were more counselors available or until there were support staff available to relieve counselors of paperwork.

Although the actual percent of time the counseling and guidance program spent on each of the four components of the TEA Comprehensive Model varied across participants and campuses, at all six sites the most time spent was judged to be on responsive services or responsive services and individual planning. Generally the smallest percent of time (in some cases zero) was spent on guidance curriculum or system support. When asked how they would ideally allocate the counseling and guidance time across the four components, the adult focus group respondents decreased or eliminated any time devoted to non-counseling duties; they gave the greatest increase in time to guidance curriculum. The groups varied on time devoted to individual planning in that two groups wanted it increased, two wanted it decreased, and two kept it about the same. All groups wanted to decrease the time spent on responsive services, and the participants wanted to keep the percent of time on system support the least of the four components.

Nearly all counselors and other adult participants felt that for a successful counseling and guidance program the focus of the program must be preventive and proactive, not reactive. The feeling was that if more

preventive activities were done that this would reduce the time needed in intervention. However, at most campuses the counselor, principal, teachers, and parents felt that the current program was spending the majority of time on intervention activities, with much less time for prevention than the participants would like. If professional and support staff were added to their programs, most participants would focus counseling and guidance on preventive activities, while also handling crises.

## **Policy Concerns**

### **Areas for Policy Attention**

Counselors, teachers, and administrators at these middle schools were in favor of adopting the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC to provide a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of counselors generally if there were adequate student-to-counselor ratios and support staff. They pointed out the need to continue to emphasize or strengthen the TEA Comprehensive Model in the area of collaboration among teachers, parents, and counselors, specifically clarifying the role of school staff and parents in the counseling and guidance program. There was strong support for strengthening the professional identity and status of the counselor, primarily by eliminating non-counseling/guidance duties. Middle/junior high school participants, like their elementary counterparts, saw a need to educate the public, including parents, about the role of the counselor and to encourage more parental and community involvement in the counseling and guidance program. The need to enhance the cooperation between community and social services to provide better access and streamline delivery of services to children was mentioned by several participants. It was suggested that the ESCs could play a stronger role as liaison with the community. Both ESCs and districts also were seen as sources for increased and improved training for counselors to meet the social needs of today's students. Districts could also better support campus counseling and guidance programs by providing a districtwide comprehensive, developmental guidance curriculum. Participants consistently identified the need for more counselors to lower the student-to-counselor ratio, specifically mentioning the need for males and minorities. In addition, counseling and guidance programs in middle schools need support staff such as clerical/data entry help, registrars, and scheduling assistance.

## **Characteristics of Successful Programs**

Middle school participants emphasized that successful counseling and guidance programs are adequately staffed with both counselors and support staff. As a result, counselors are accessible and highly responsive to student needs and spend the majority of their time providing direct student services. In addition to providing individual counseling, the program provides group counseling and classroom guidance. The services provided are based on a needs assessment process reflective of input from students, parents, and school staff. Collaboration also was often mentioned as an important characteristic of the effective counseling and guidance program, with counselors, teachers, and parents working together as a team and the counselor serving as a leader and resource. The program is responsive to teacher and parent needs and program effectiveness is assessed through feedback from teachers, administrators, students, and parents. A successful program is seen as proactive and preventive in focus, with services to all students to meet their personal, academic, and career needs. Outcomes that are characteristics of successful counseling and guidance programs are: (a) more responsible behavior by students and schools that do not have substance abuse or gang problems; (b) improved academic performance; (c) decreased disciplinary referrals and fewer referrals to the counselor; and (d) decreased dropout rates for all students. Study participants also looked beyond students' current grade levels to increased graduation rates and student success after high school as longer-term outcomes of successful counseling and guidance programs.

## Middle/Junior High School: Campus 7

### Background

#### Campus Characteristics

This campus is located in a central city district with lower than average district wealth. It has 863 students enrolled in Grades 6-8. Under the 1995 accountability system, academic performance at the campus was rated *Acceptable*, a rating received by the majority of campuses statewide. Table 7.1 summarizes student, teacher, and counselor characteristics at this campus.

#### Interview Sources

Interviews were conducted with the principal, counselor, adult focus group, and student focus group. The adult focus group included one learning specialist, three parents, and nine teachers. The student group consisted of nine students in Grades 6-8.

### Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

#### Development and History on Campus

The counselor reported that the mission of the counseling and guidance program was developed by a committee appointed by the superintendent. This committee was composed of community members, the district's counseling and guidance service coordinator, and a team of teachers and counselors.

Discussing organization, the counselor said that the program has three full-time counselor positions and

that their responsibilities are divided by function rather than by grade level to allow them to specialize. He added that this is what they prefer. According to him, this allows each student to have access to each counselor and makes it easier for students to choose the one they feel most comfortable with. One counselor is responsible for the testing, scheduling, at risk, bilingual, and English as a second language (ESL) programs. A second counselor is responsible for registration and the gifted and talented program. The third counselor is responsible for the special education program with over 200 students.

#### Goals and Expectations

Although the principal did not mention a formal written statement for the counseling and guidance program, in his opinion, the program's mission is academic success—that is, to help students pass the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and to graduate. The principal said he wants to reach all students and that this goal currently drives the mission and priorities of counseling and guidance. When he first arrived at this campus, the counseling and guidance program was disciplinary in orientation. According to the counselor, the objective of the counseling and guidance program is to provide developmental and socially appropriate programs to meet the needs of middle school students, such as conflict resolution programs. Teachers, parents, community members, and others in the adult focus group agreed that important objectives of counseling and guidance are to accent the positive things about each student and to create an environment where students are safe, comfortable, and able to seek out assistance when needed.

**Table 7.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #7**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	19%	8%	Number of Counselor Positions	3
Hispanic	37%	3%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	None
White	44%	89%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	288:1
Other Minority	0%	0%	Number of Teachers	66
Economically Disadvantaged	51%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	10 Years
Limited English Proficient	5%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.

## Campus Implementation

The counselor interviewed reported performing an extensive array of duties. The principal, who was new to the school this year, initiated a common courtesy program for the whole school. While this program has turned the school around for both students and teachers, it requires a considerable amount of each counselor's time, in the counselor's opinion. Counselors are in the hall each morning to greet and welcome students, they are in the halls at the change of each class to greet and talk to students, they have lunch daily with students and their parents in the school cafeteria, they are in the halls when school lets out to say good-bye to students, they are in at least one classroom each day, and the counselor gets on each bus at the end of the school day every Friday to wish each student a good weekend. According to the counselor, the common courtesy program has greatly increased counselor visibility and availability to students.

The counselor reported that he and the other two counselors each conducted individual and group counseling and some classroom guidance lessons. The school is divided into three clusters of students, and each counselor works with students in one of the clusters. Most of the individual counseling sessions he reported conducting were primarily due to crises in students' lives. This school year the counselor indicated that topics for the group counseling sessions have included school survival and success, relationships, conflict management, study skills, and organizational skills. He coordinates and brings in a community organization that runs small groups with a focus on increasing students' self-esteem. The main classroom guidance lessons he conducts focus on working with the new sixth grade students and conducting career investigation classes, in conjunction with administering vocational aptitude tests to eighth grade students.

The counselor interviewed was in charge of TAAS test administration, class scheduling, grade reporting, and the bilingual and ESL programs, including serving as chair of the Language Placement Assessment Committee (LPAC). He consults with teachers before students are scheduled. He reported that 50 percent of his time was spent on doing record-keeping related to the TAAS and class scheduling. He reported taking this work home evenings and weekends as much as possible to optimize his time with students during the school day. This interviewed counselor reported

meeting weekly with the teachers in his cluster to review students needs and progress and to coordinate with the teachers on which students might need some extra help. To aid in this process the counselor monitors students' grades and test scores. The counselor focuses on working most closely with those students who are not succeeding each six weeks. Each six weeks the counselor and one or more of the cluster teachers meet with each student's parents to review students' progress.

The counselor also is responsible for the school's at-risk program. Students are identified for entry into the program when they are achieving at least two years below grade level. In addition to working with teachers, students in this program work with learning specialists to try and improve their test scores and grades, as well as earn credits. The counselor works closely with the students, teachers, and learning specialists and keeps detailed records of students' progress. The counselor is part of the school's team of staff who coordinates the referrals of high risk students to a wide variety of community services, as dictated by the students' needs. He is also a member of the school's crisis action team which finds the appropriate immediate help for students who are experiencing a crisis. Students who are placed in the in-school suspension (ISS) program have to work closely with the counselors.

The counselor reported extensive involvement in the transition of students from middle school to high school, and especially in the transition of elementary students to middle school. The counselor visited each one of the eleven feeder elementary schools to orient students to middle school and review incoming students' schedules with both the students and their elementary counselors. He also holds one or more evening meetings for parents and arranges for orientation tours of the school for the new students and their parents. Once the sixth graders start middle school, he holds orientation meetings with them over the first six-weeks period. For students going to high school, the counselor works with them on their four-year plans for high school course work. Counselors work closely with the high school counselors. Counselors also work closely with students who will be going to the high school magnet program, as well as working closely with magnet school staff.

In addition to coordinating a general mentoring program, the counselor coordinates a large federally-funded mentoring program. The counselor reported

this took a tremendous amount of time because of all the coordination meetings held at either the district, university, or college involved in the program. He reported making some home visits when he felt it was needed, as well as meeting individually with parents as requested. The counselor teaches classes and provides training to school staff on conflict mediation and dealing positively with students from diverse cultures. The counselor also supervises the secretary and the parent volunteers who work in the counseling and guidance office. He brings in motivational speakers and speakers to talk about various businesses and careers, as well as providing materials for students to review in a career center. The counselors also plan and conduct a career day to help students learn about various careers.

Teachers, administrators, parents, and students all thought the counselors were great, were doing a tremendous job, and were essential for a successful school. However, the counselor reported 50 percent of his time being spent on record-keeping duties and regularly taking paperwork home.

All administrators, teachers, parents, counselors, and students can refer students for counseling and guidance services. At the beginning of the school year, counselors conduct a written needs assessment of teachers and students. The counselors also evaluate needs assessment information, requests, and referrals to form small groups for students (with parental permission). Every six weeks each students' progress is evaluated. The counselor reported using scheduling opportunities to check on students' progress. Special education students' needs are assessed and planned for through the Admission, Review and Dismissal process and through each student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Because the counselor greets students informally in the halls in the morning, has lunch with students in the cafeteria, and visits at least one classroom each day, he informally assesses students' needs. He also tracks students' progress via personal computer (PC) on a student database file.

There are three full-time counselors on campus yielding a student-to-counselor ratio of 288 to 1. There is one secretary who also works for the school nurse. Each counselor has his or her own PC, access to a student database, and use of a wide variety of diagnostic materials. The counselor reported that there are several regular parent volunteers he supervises, who help in the counseling and guidance office.

The principal did not hire any counselors at the middle school. In his previous positions as a principal he only had one occasion to hire a counselor. His perception is that counseling positions experience little turnover and that counselors tend to move among schools within a district. Teachers are a potential pool for counselors because counselors must have classroom experience. The ideal counselor, according to the principal, is one who had to work his or her way through college and who faced problems similar to those the students face; not a "silver spoon person." The counselor must have love and compassion for teenagers and care for those students who may be the most difficult to reach.

In addition to administering the large mentoring program, the district also provides a center for alternative programs where students with special needs can be referred, such as the school for pregnant students. The counselor mentioned that he did attend in-service training at the local Education Service Center (ESC).

Adult participants reported that they saw much improvement in parental involvement this past school year. Parents now have to come into school every six weeks and meet with their child's counselor and teacher about their child's progress. There is also a monthly coffee for parents in the evenings where interviewees reported good parent participation. Usually one or more of the counselors were present at these meetings. Also instituted this year was having teachers call at least one parent daily with a positive message about their child. Parents have been responsive to being invited to eat lunch in the school cafeteria with their child. The counselor reported this had increased the number of parent contacts with counselors. Parents in the adult focus group credited the three counselors for turning parent involvement around and getting many more parents involved in the counseling and guidance program and in the school.

The counselor reported involvement with the local community, primarily when the school cannot meet the needs of students or their families for services. The community also provides adult mentors for students in need. Agencies and groups specifically mentioned by the counselor included Alcoholics Anonymous, Teens Anonymous, the local children's shelter, the local temporary living shelter, Protective and Regulatory Services, Department of Human Services, the American Red Cross, the county health department and local health clinics, county legal aid, the local center for alternative programs, the counsel-

ing department of the local university, mentors from the local Hispanic professional association, and a large mentoring program with the local university. In the large mentoring program, college and university students serving as mentors have to undergo 16 hours of training and must spend up to 10 hours each week with the student assigned to them. There is also a scholars' program, a collaboration between the business community and the school, that provides representatives from local businesses to speak to students about different careers.

## Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services

### Areas Prompting Need for Change

From the counselor interview and adult focus group discussion, the most prominent set of suggested changes involved increasing counselors' student-centered tasks by reducing the amount of time spent on TAAS administration and scheduling. One teacher stated, "I am sure that it is true in almost every school that counselors get bogged down with scheduling instead of counseling—what they really ought to do." According to parents, they see paperwork piled on the counselor's desk because he will not turn down a student. These statements reflect a need to better define the role of the counselor. The counselor, teachers, and parents in the adult focus group suggested that non-counseling tasks for students be allocated to other personnel (e.g., registrar or staff member trained to coordinate and administer the TAAS). The principal indicated that the school was automating class scheduling for the next school year with assistant principals in charge of the process. The principal felt this will free counselors' time for more direct student services.

The counselor said that students' social needs have changed and expressed concern that these needs are not being met at home: "Home is not necessarily safe anymore." In his view, more students are angry and rejected. The counselor said that the social needs of the economically disadvantaged and minority students exert pressure on the demand for his services.

Participants in the adult focus group said there are always students lined up outside the counselor's door and that his counseling services are in high demand. Students confirmed this and suggest more counseling was needed for students with "bad attitudes," who are in gangs, or who are "bossy." In general, student

focus group members agreed that there is demand for more counselors because students want more one-on-one time. The adult focus group felt that all students were served but that average students may not get as much attention as high profile students such as students who are at risk of dropping out of school. Both the principal and the counselor want to better address the personal needs of students who are at risk, especially Hispanic students who have the highest dropout rate.

While all students in the focus group had had contact with the counselor during the school year, they also wanted counselors to be in their office during the

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*"I am sure that it is true in almost every school that counselors get bogged down with scheduling instead of counseling."*

—Teacher

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lunch hour for private visits. The students asked that more counselors be made available, and debated the possibility of using student counselors so students with immediate needs can get help. Students said that if counselors are available whenever students need them, fewer students will get into trouble. Students also said it would be helpful if counselors could be more open-minded.

Adult focus group participants agreed that social needs of students have changed, and these changes have made counseling and guidance services a necessity for all students. They also felt that creating a public relations program could help community members understand what counselors do and stated that enhancing communication between counselors and the community is necessary to serve all students in a successful counseling and guidance program.

### Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs

The counselor, principal, teachers, students, and parents reported that academic, personal, and career needs of students are all addressed but in different ways. Teachers' opinions were that the program puts greater emphasis on the academic and personal needs of students. In their view, addressing student needs as they are related to academic growth, however, better prepares them for the future. The principal said that

the three aspects are interrelated and are essential to student success. The counselor re-emphasized that his objective is to meet the needs of every student in a holistic way, noting this school to be the only school in the district with a comprehensive program. He added that personal needs have been addressed by implementing a student-centered approach: “We’re always available for personal counseling. The students come first. I don’t care what I’m doing with TAAS or anything else. When a child walks in our office... we don’t continue to type and do those things and—[say] your problem is kind of secondary right now. We stop and we visit with them.” Teachers agreed that counselors make efforts to meet and get to know all students: “There is not a kid in this school that has not set foot in the counselors office.”

According to the counselor and principal, career concerns are interwoven in every aspect of the school. Both the principal and most of the students who participated in the focus group identified career efforts to be an area in which counselors place most focus. The principal felt that students are motivated to come to school if they perceive the relevance of what is being taught: “They [students] come [to school] if they want to come and [if] there is something here for them [that’s] relevant to them and their immediate future.” The principal, counselor, and students said that eighth grade students are required to take a career exploration course. The counselor explained that this course entails, on a weekly basis, films about how to prepare a budget, information on salaries and living expenses, and how differences in educational levels have an effect on monetary compensation. Career elements, according to the teachers, are emphasized by counselors with students who are at risk by making them consider the role of education in their future. According to one of the parents, the counselors make students think about the impact that scheduling decisions today will have on their futures. Student focus group participants indicated that academic growth is emphasized in sixth and seventh grades through course selection and in the eighth grade through individual sessions where counselors discuss high school course selections.

The counselor and many of the teachers and students in the focus groups felt that academic success was tied closely to students’ personal growth. The counselor said that personal aspects of guidance should be the top priority and explained that an individual has to develop first as a person before academic and career elements can be developed. Student focus group

members mentioned this was especially true for students who have problems at home. These students suggested that counseling and guidance services could benefit those who don’t feel good about themselves, have a bad attitude, or “feel they own the school.” In general, students agreed that counselors give more attention to students whose parents “don’t care about them” because “they need someone... they need to know that someone cares.” Regarding students at risk, the counselor stated, “We help them [students at risk] to develop personally... we meet with those 50 kids every other day to talk about this particular program. And it’s a lot of self-esteem—you can do it—and building them up.”

Students also expressed satisfaction and appreciation for counselors’ support. One student said, “Every time the counselor talks to me I feel good about it.” However, students in the focus group also mentioned students who are not familiar with the counselors and have never used counseling and guidance services.

### **Emphasis in Allocating Services According to the Comprehensive Model Components**

The counselor, principal, staff, parents, and a community representative were asked to estimate the percentage of counseling and guidance program time allocated to each of the four Texas Education Agency (TEA) Comprehensive Model components. Table 7.2 on Page 66 contains the adult focus group participants’ perceptions of counseling time allocations at this campus.

When discussing the program’s comprehensive emphasis and proactive elements, the counselor reported that prevention prevails over intervention. He cited the school’s team of staff that coordinates referrals, the clusters, and mentoring support to students who are at risk as examples of programs designed to be proactively responsive to student needs. However, both the counselor and principal indicated that counselors spend more time on responsive services, followed by individual planning.

Teachers and parents perceived a more equal distribution of program time spent on responsive services, individual planning, and guidance curriculum. They believed that system support was the least emphasized. In the adult focus group, the responsive services component was identified as being the most emphasized, ranging between 25 percent and 65 percent of counselors’ time. According to the counselor, respon-

sive services are provided through small group sessions and consultation with parents.

System support was estimated by principal, counselor, and members in the adult focus group to range between 10 and 15 percent of counselors' time. The principal described this component to include counselors visiting classrooms daily so they will be able to support teachers professionally and personally. The counselor described this system support to include counselors providing support and training for teachers in skills required for effective conflict mediation and other counseling skills.

Both teachers and parents said that counselors spend a significant amount of their time on other, non-counseling-related activities. Although teachers and parents recommended few changes in the allocation of program time, they reiterated the need to reduce the amount of time counselors spend on class scheduling and TAAS administration.

### Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach

The principal said that the role of counselors has changed in the last 10-15 years, when counselors were only supposed to do class scheduling. He added that in successful schools today, counselors are highly visible and are in the classrooms with the students.

Except for discrepancies in the definition of the guidance curriculum component, the counselor and principal agreed that counselors' roles and responsibilities in this school were consistent with the TEA Comprehensive Model and the Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC). According to the principal the statements form a good framework for counselor evaluation and promote a student-centered counseling and guidance program focus.

The principal noted that preventive efforts are implemented on the basis of student needs assessments. In this regard, he mentioned that conflict resolution had been successful in preventing disciplinary problems. The counselor agreed and mentioned that last year counselors implemented a formal conflict resolution program with the assistance of a local university, which was so effective that it was not necessary to have it again this year. Other activities the principal included as having contributed to preventive efforts were the counselors' daily visits to classrooms, their visibility during lunch and when school is dismissed, the conflict resolution for which teachers are responsible, peer mediation, and the common courtesy philosophy. In the adult focus group, teacher, parent, and student involvement in the counseling and guidance program were referred to as factors contributing to the academic success experienced within the past year at this school.

Teachers agreed with the principal and counselor that the counseling and guidance program has a strong preventive focus because of the program allowing potential dropouts to finish middle school in two years, the job-shadowing program, and the peer mediation/conflict resolution program. One teacher pointed out that, "The counselors make sure that the kids understand that their actions and their reactions are their responsibility." The emphasis on prevention, according to the counselor, has rendered a variety of benefits. In comparing the current to the previous year, he noted that students are better adjusted in their classes, fewer students are sent to the principal's office or to ISS, students as a whole seem to be happier, and the academic failure rate has decreased. The success in moving toward a more comprehensive, preventive program was recognized by members in the adult focus group, as well. Teachers, parents, and other staff identified a positive learning environment as being the key to all students' success. Participants in the focus groups said that prevention of academic failure implies

<b>Table 7.2</b> <b>Perceived Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #7</b>										
Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
School Staff*	23%	32%	25%	26%	23%	25%	11%	14%	20%	12%
Parents*	23%	25%	28%	27%	32%	25%	12%	13%	0%	15%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff and parent perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

taking care of students' social and emotional needs as well.

### **Factors Relevant to the Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

The counselor identified being proactive to be one characteristic of successful counseling and guidance programs. The principal said that he would like to adopt the TEA Comprehensive Model and the TEMPSC in this school eventually. Adult focus group participants commented that awareness of the components would help more efficiently direct counseling and guidance efforts. The recognition that the need exists for a comprehensive model was brought up in all the interviews, but more so in the counselor interview and in the adult focus group. Also, the counselor noted that a better evaluation and follow-up system could enhance the capacity to monitor these services in a more systematic way.

The principal said that this year, because of the implementation of new programs, counselors were not doing much classroom guidance. Next year, when he and the assistant principals assume responsibility for class scheduling, he expects much more time to be available for counselors to conduct classroom guidance. The counselor wanted to increase time for classroom guidance lessons and activities. Parents in the focus group said that ideally (on average) 23 percent of counselors' time should be devoted to guidance curriculum, and school staff recommended 32 percent. The principal's estimate of current time allocation to guidance curriculum was 5 percent, and the counselor said he spent 20 percent. Discrepancies reflected differences in definitions, not in actual allocation of time. The counselor and participants in both focus groups corroborated that the counselors work overtime, weekends, and evenings to meet the needs of students. Participating teachers and parents felt that tasks such as scheduling and TAAS coordination and administration are not included in the list of responsibilities in the TEA Comprehensive Model.

In the discussion concerning steps toward a proactive program, little mention was given specific to the allocation of resources (e.g., budget or the student-to-counselor ratio). Even though students expressed a need for more private time with the counselor, the principal said there was no need to change the current ratio and, further, felt that raising the ratio would have a negative impact. He mentioned changes in scheduling technology to address this demand. Teachers and

other members of the adult focus groups perceived that scheduling interfered with counselor's professional duties, and suggested hiring a registrar or clerical staff solely devoted to the counselors, but saw no specific need for another counselor.

The counselor felt that integrating agency and other community services into a local youth system would be highly beneficial not only for students, but for the school's counseling and guidance program as well. He said that it would help scale down counselors' efforts to find appropriate resources by bringing the resources together, thus saving counselors time. In his opinion, this would also reduce the paperwork burden on the counselors who have to record every referral for the district office.

Additional opinions from student focus group members about the counseling and guidance program are summarized in Table 7.3 on Page 68.

## **Policy Concerns**

### **Characteristics and Indicators of Success**

The counselor said that a counseling and guidance program is successful if it is proactive, which for this program means using needs assessment data for planning—that is, sharing it with appropriate staff and then developing solutions for meeting student needs. He also said a program is effective when students are happy, their immediate needs are being met, and there is successful pupil development (social, emotional, and personal). In a successful program the counselor has time to follow up with students to see how they are progressing and to conduct an ongoing evaluation of the program.

The principal's view of what makes a successful program focused on counselor accessibility and regard. He noted that the more visible counselors are within the school, the more they are valued by faculty. In turn, qualities teachers associated with a successful counseling and guidance program included: (a) high responsiveness to student needs; (b) a principal who supports the program and lets counselors focus on service provision rather than paperwork; (c) availability of counselors; (d) a solution-oriented approach; and (e) allowing counselors to attend available workshops and be updated on counseling techniques so they can remain current professionally. Parents said that a successful program is responsive to parents' needs and concerns. Students said that the

program could be improved with more immediate access to the counselor because having to wait before seeing the counselor sometimes gets them into further trouble.

The counselor and adult focus group participants mentioned that a reduction in the frequency with

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*“I guess the most frustrating thing about our job is many times people wonder what . . . we do.”*

—Counselor

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which students visit counselors indicates program effectiveness. Other indicators the counselor mentioned were how much school safety, student self-esteem, and students showing respect to peers and staff improve from previous years. The principal discussed a counseling and guidance program “success ratio,” which includes increases in the graduation rate, decreases in the dropout rate, and increases in the percentages of students passing the TAAS.

## Messages for Policy Makers

The following was condensed from the interviews into messages for policy makers.

- Regarding counselor roles and responsibilities, the counselor suggested eliminating tasks not focused on the direct provision of counseling and guidance services to students. He indicated that this could be addressed better at the local level if community members (local school board members, parents, educators, etc.) were made more aware of the professional roles and responsibilities of counselors. As he stated, “I guess the most frustrating thing about our job is many times people wonder what...we do.”
- Focus group participants suggested changing counseling and guidance programs to place focus on ensuring the success of all students. To accomplish this, they proposed proactively promoting and educating community members about the professional role of the school counselor, as defined under the TEA Comprehensive Model.

**Table 7.3**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance at Campus #7**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor helps me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	7	—	2
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	6	—	3
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	8	1	—
D. understand the good things about my homework.	2	3	4
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	7	—	2
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	8	—	1
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	8	—	1
2. I am excited about the work we are doing in the guidance program	7	—	2
3. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.	9	—	—
4. I see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	—	9	—
5. The counselor is fun to be around.	7	—	2

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

## Potential Areas for Policy Attention

The following areas for policy attention were compiled from interviewee comments.

- *Increase staff support so that extraneous duties for counselors are reduced or eliminated.* For instance, parents in the focus group recommended hiring an assistant to handle course scheduling for students, rather than counselors doing it. Similarly, teachers recommended hiring a registrar to assist counselors with administrative duties. The counselor would like both scheduling and test administration handled by someone other than counselors.
- *Provide a better definition of the school counselor's role through strengthening the counselor's professional identity.* The counselor recommended putting more focus on the direct provision of services rather than on extraneous duties so counselors can spend more time dealing with the increasingly serious problems of students today such as being abandoned by parents, substance abuse, gang involvement, and teenage pregnancy. In his words, "We just fight for our lives constantly."
- *Encourage even more teacher involvement in the counseling and guidance program.* Freely complimenting and recognizing the contributions teachers made in helping students with peer mediation and conflict resolution, the counselor indicated that teachers potentially have much to offer in supporting additional areas of the counseling and guidance program.
- *Encourage greater community involvement in the counseling and guidance program.* Parents noted that greater community involvement could help counselors more successfully address challenging student problems such as teenage pregnancy, involvement in gangs, drug abuse, and dropping out. Suggested approaches included spotlighting counseling and guidance programs at Parent-Teacher Organization meetings and better integrating and coordinating community services for youths. As the counselor stated, "The school's counseling program is no better than the support they [program staff] get from the community."

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*"The school's counseling program is no better than the support they [program staff] get from the community."*

—Counselor

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- *Use strategies to more effectively target counseling and guidance services on groups of underserved students to better meet the needs of all students.* Particular concern was expressed regarding the disproportionately high number of Hispanic students who have failing grades, discipline problems, or who are dropping out of school. Strategies suggested included increasing the number of Hispanic faculty and using multicultural programs to help counselors address these issues.
- *Strengthen the role of Education Service Centers (ESCs) in providing support to school counselors.* Although the counselor acknowledged assistance from one ESC staff member on the school's multicultural program, he indicated that the ESC had not been responsive in supporting the school's implementation of the peer mediation program.

## Middle/Junior High School: Campus 10

### Background

#### Campus Characteristics

This campus is located in a large urban district with higher than average district wealth. There are 959 students enrolled in Grades 7 and 8. Approximately 40 percent of the students come from across the district for the science magnet program, and 60 percent are from the local area. Campus academic performance was rated *Low Performing* under the 1995 accountability system. Table 10.1 summarizes some characteristics of students, teachers, and counselors.

#### Interview Sources

The counselor, principal, and student focus group interviews were conducted. Because of unanticipated problems, the adult focus group was not held. Therefore, some information may be unavailable or may be limited. The student focus group included twelve Grade 8 students; seven were female, and five were male.

### Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

#### Development and History on Campus

The counselor reported that when she was hired at this campus five years ago, she inherited a counseling and guidance program that had been set up by the former principal, who previously had been a counselor. The

counseling and guidance program was developed with input from all staff and community participants and then promoted by the principal. The counselor remarked that the counseling and guidance program already in place made such good sense to her that the only adjustments and additions she has made have been based on changing student needs. In contrast, the principal, who has been here for two years, said, "We do not have a clear set of expectations written somewhere that says that these are the things that we need to do in a year." He expects counselors to have a well-defined, cohesive program with yearly goals and objectives developed by the principal and counselors together and to evaluate the effectiveness of the counseling and guidance program in meeting its yearly objectives.

#### Goals and Expectations

In the counselor's view, the school mission is to promote a holistic environment for all students. Because this is a magnet as well as a neighborhood school, students are diverse ethnically as well as economically. The counselor tried to bridge these differences by providing services needed by all students. In her experience, even though economic circumstances can be a barrier, the needs of this age group are similar.

While there is no written mission for the counseling and guidance program, the principal defines the mission as counselors supporting students both intellectually and emotionally. The counselor should be very knowledgeable about the academic program and

**Table 10.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #10**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	31%	18%	Number of Counselor Positions	2
Hispanic	20%	13%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	None
White	46%	66%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	480:1
Other Minority	4%	3%	Number of Teachers	66
Economically Disadvantaged	39%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	7 Years
Limited English Proficient	6%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.  
Note: Ethnicity percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

how its contents affect each student, and make recommendations to each student about what is best for him or her. He said, “Counselors need to be perceived as those caring, loving people who never make any decisions that are necessarily going to be in any way adverse for the student — that they are a friend, someone that you can talk to about anything that is going on in your life that may be interrupting or causing you not to be as successful as you [would] like to [be].”

Both counselor and principal interpreted the role of guidance to be one of supporting academics and helping focus students in the right direction for success. They also agreed that counseling involves listening to students about their problems or needs. The counselor stated, “It is a listening experience for me, especially when you have this age group because they are the ones with everything to say.” The principal said the counselor’s role was to “listen and only make suggestions or recommendations after the child has pretty much made it clear what their needs are by communicating with the counselor.” The counselor also expressed this as the counselor’s role.

The counselor stated that the community expects her to listen to students and find outside resources to meet their often rather basic needs, such as being without food, clothing, or medical services. She also perceived community members expecting counselors to give them progress reports on students and let them know how they can help students. In summary, she said, “They expect my role to be one of support, one of nurturing, one of guidance.” The principal was not certain what the community expected, but based on the counselor’s feedback, community members see the counselor’s role as one of guiding and assisting students in addressing social and emotional issues.

## **Campus Implementation**

The counselor spoke of performing a myriad of tasks. She is the eighth grade counselor and has been working with these students since they were seventh graders. In her opinion, her most time consuming activity is scheduling students into classes and changing schedules. Scheduling involves studying all available data on students (test scores, grades, etc.) and recommending courses in which they can succeed. She pointed out that when she feels a student should be taking honors courses, but the student does not think so, she encourages that student to sit in on the honors class to judge for him- or herself. She also

encourages the student to talk to the teacher. She advises students academically about how course sequences fit together. The counselor reported that she often enters student schedule changes into the computer herself. She is the campus test coordinator, responsible for administering the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) tests and the district’s norm-referenced tests. This year the Differential Aptitude Test (DAT) was administered to all eighth graders, and she met with each student to interpret his or her scores in terms of the aptitudes the test indicated, and to discuss career options and professions in which these aptitudes might be most useful.

The counselor worked closely with students receiving special education services, attending their Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings and assisting with the inclusion process (the process of including students receiving special education services into the regular education classrooms). She emphasized spending considerable time on transition activities, both for incoming students and for students who will be entering high school. In her judgment, time involved is increased because students feed into this school from across the city, and eighth graders attend high schools all over the city.

Thus, the process includes her visiting many elementary campuses to talk to students, as well as arranging for orientation sessions for sixth graders at this school. For elementary transition, a two-day orientation is held. In this orientation, eighth graders conduct building tours for prospective students. Visiting sixth graders congregate in the cafeteria to complete course choice sheets, with the counselor’s guidance, about which electives they want. The counselor has eighth graders describe options “because junior high kids will tell you exactly like they see it, and they will say, ‘No, don’t get that class because it is awful.’ ” During orientation, the counselor describes the school and explains rules, how block classes operate, changing classes, backpacks, lockers, security, time for each class, what not to do, and other topics of student concern. She stressed this orientation is conducted so students will feel comfortable when they come to this school the next year. She also visits feeder schools that will be sending students who receive special education services and attends these students’ ARD meetings so she can learn how to help them adjust.

For high school transition, she arranges for high school counselors to hold orientation for students at this campus and for students to visit high schools they will

attend, meeting with the respective high school counselors. The major activity for eighth grade students is completing their high school course choice sheets and working on their four-year high school course plans. The counselor explained that she provides extensive advice to students about expectations for various courses. She calls counselors at all receiving schools and arranges for transition activities. For schools to which only a few students are going, the high school usually sends a bus for the students, gives them the building tour, has them work on choice sheets, and explains how that school functions. In 1994-95, there were two high schools that each received 100 students from this school. In those cases, counselors from those schools came to this campus and worked with students on choice sheets and other orientation activities and returned to finish any choice sheets not completed earlier.

The counselor obtains a weekly list of students who are failing, contacts these students to offer help, and calls their parents. At the end of the school year, she develops a plan of action for any student who is failing. She also mentioned her responsibility for a mentoring program in which adults are assigned to students who need an adult role model. This includes recruiting new mentors, providing orientation for new mentors, and ensuring each mentor/student combination is effective. Other programs the counselor is involved with deal with conflict resolution and peer mediation training for students. During the 1993-94 school year, she planned, organized, and conducted a full-day leadership conference for all seventh graders and their teachers.

The counselor acknowledged maintaining ongoing communication and collaboration with teachers about individual students and their needs. She registers new students by meeting with the student and his or her parents; holds conferences with parents at school; and calls parents about student progress or when she has concerns. Informally she contacts parents at locations outside school, such as the grocery store or church. In addition, the counselor tutors some parents and sees others through their attendance at community and school activities; works with some parents to procure health care or other social service needs; and attends a monthly community booster program and maintains contacts with various community agencies to be aware of possible resources for students and parents.

Both principal and counselor agreed that the roles and responsibilities of a counselor, as stated in the TEA Comprehensive Model, match those for counselors at this campus, except for teaching classroom guidance lessons. The principal and counselor added that counselors do additional activities not specified, such as developing a year-end action plan for students who are failing. Both mentioned that the principal and assistant principals, rather than the counselors, handle

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*“I mean, once upon a time, the biggest deal was someone cutting class, and now you worry about violence and weapons and drugs and, now, bombings.”*

—Counselor

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discipline to reinforce perceptions of counselors as advisors—not authority figures. The principal acknowledged that the school is in the process of establishing a common vision, and he believes “counseling is critical to the whole process.”

The counselor did not mention conducting formal written needs assessments, but she networks frequently with teachers, and teachers and administrators can refer students to her. On a weekly basis, she contacts students who are failing. She also uses her frequent contacts with students through scheduling and other academic matters to check on their progress. Through registering students and meeting with parents, she also assesses student and parent needs. She examines students’ test scores, grades, and other student data from the district’s student master data file.

The current ratio is 480 students to one counselor. Each counselor works with students for two years. There is one full-time secretary/registrar. Each counselor has a personal computer (PC) on her desk that is connected to the district’s mainframe computer to access student information, to print out student grades, and to schedule and make schedule changes. The school’s computers, according to both counselor and principal, are outdated. Materials, primarily books, used by the program address subjects such as drug abuse, parenting, pregnancy, education, and occupations. Videotapes are also available on topics such as alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, and crisis management. She spoke of obtaining materials based

on what students tell her they want to know more about.

The counselor explained that the only counseling position she had applied for was the one she currently holds. However, she was not aware of the number of applicants when she applied for the position. The principal was involved once in hiring a counselor and commented that there was an ample supply of applicants. He noted that today there is an increased need for bilingual counselors, who are hard to find. The principal stressed that teachers with counseling credentials absolutely would be considered for a counselor position. He saw the ideal counselor as being one who “when they are not there, you miss them.” From his perspective, the counselor should be very well organized, be able to get along and work with anyone, have excellent communication skills, not be easily offended, and work extremely hard. He believed the most important quality is the counselor understanding that the counselor’s job is to serve students to the best of his or her abilities.

The counselor commented that she receives many of her books and the DAT testing materials from the district. She also mentioned that the district had defined the scope and sequence for a guidance curriculum that she does not use, and she felt that she does not take sufficient advantage of the Education Service Center (ESC) resources.

Parents fall into two diverse groups, according to the counselor. One group is well educated (often those parents who live in another part of town, but who have chosen to send their children here to attend the science magnet program), maintaining regular contacts with this school, following their children’s progress, and being aware of the counseling and guidance program. The second group includes parents who may not have much education, do not speak English, are intimidated by school, or who do not know about the counseling and guidance program. For safety reasons, the counselor emphasized that she no longer makes home visits unless she knows the parents well. Other than mentoring efforts, the principal was not aware of efforts to involve parents.

The counselor identified several community resources that are integrated into the counseling and guidance program. For example, the program works with volunteers from a community church who serve as mentors. These volunteers are mostly retired educa-

tors who attended this school and now want “to give something back.” She also has volunteer mentors from the nearby college and local university, especially from fraternity and sorority organizations. She works with a community health clinic that provides services for students and their families. When asked about partnerships with local businesses, the counselor replied that businesses located in this school attendance zone were mainly taverns or bistros, so there are no partnerships with them.

In the counselor’s opinion, the counseling and guidance program does a good job of meeting all students’ needs, including the needs of students receiving special education services. The principal felt that students not performing well academically are in need of more attention from the counseling and guidance program.

## **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

### **Areas Prompting Need for Change**

From the counselor’s perspective, counselors’ roles and responsibilities have changed because the problems students experience have become more serious. Four students she worked with at this campus during the last five years died in 1994-95 from violence. She remarked that magnet and non-magnet school students may have different circumstances, but their problems are similar to those faced by all teenagers. The counselor said, “I think the needs of people will always remain the same if you look at Maslow’s hierarchy. Most assuredly, circumstances have changed, situations have changed. I mean, once upon a time, the biggest deal was someone cutting class, and now you worry about violence and weapons and drugs and, now, bombings.”

The principal said, “I talk about the belligerence and anger that the kids seem to have toward any adult or authority figures and their refusal to want to do anything you ask without a lot of questions.” He believed there are the same basic needs, but there is added difficulty in addressing needs today because of the belligerence, argumentativeness, and anger of many students. He also mentioned indifference, continuous academic failure, and increased numbers of discipline referrals as increasing problems. Today’s students are not obedient, according to the principal. He noted that counselors at this campus have not been equipped or trained to deal with the social needs that students bring to schools today. He concluded that student needs

have changed, while the role of the counselor has not changed but should.

The counselor reported spending 50 percent of her time on paperwork, which was the biggest impediment to performing her counselor role. She mentioned bubbling TAAS answer sheets while she talked with students. She indicated that she often arrives at school at 6:30 AM and stays after students leave to try to do paperwork. She said, "And I just don't find the paper chase to be what I am all about." The counselor continued, "I have a need to be a counselor. I do not have a need or a desire to be a data entry person. I want the freedom to do my ... job." She saw the current student-to-counselor ratio as adequate only if the counselors had a 12-month, full-time data entry clerk. She also suggested separating the duties of secretary and registrar and reassigning them to two people.

The principal preferred having three counselors—one who would be a lead counselor working closely with him, another who would be bilingual, and the third who would be a specialist in special education. In his view, counselors do not have time to give each student an individual counseling session. He stressed that if counselors actually had time to talk to every student, students would stand in a line stretching all the way to the cafeteria. When the principal discovered that the secretary/registrar mainly tracked immunization records, with little focus on data entry, schedule changes, or word processing for the counselors, he met with the secretary/registrar and redefined her duties. As a result, she is now performing more clerical duties, such as entering schedule changes. According to the principal, the school is currently installing new software that should make scheduling much faster and more efficient for the secretary and counselors.

The principal perceived problems with the counseling and guidance program. He described the campus as splintered, with each staff member doing his or her own thing. He stated that when he first became principal at this campus he saw no common school vision and no clearly defined counseling and guidance program. His intent is to establish a clearly defined program with specific goals and objectives developed jointly by the principal and counselors. This program should include more preventive activities, including small group sessions for students needing to improve their self-esteem. The principal considered a well-defined, comprehensive counseling and guidance program to be a key part of the campus improvement

plan. The plan should specify a common campus vision, how programs fit together, and clear lines of communication and authority for all school staff. He stressed that establishing this is a long process, and he and staff were just beginning to establish a common vision and focus for the school.

### **Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs**

According to student focus group members, personal development needs were most emphasized in the counseling and guidance program, followed by academics. Students in the focus group concurred that career needs were least addressed and felt that was appropriate for their age group. Most students in the group thought that personal needs were most important. As one student said, "I think that it is good they are concentrating on personal development because ... adolescence is one of the most confusing ... stages of your life and if you are trying to decide which career you can have, you can change later." Another student stated, "Those things [academic, personal, and career] are tied together. You cannot really separate them. Personal growth includes academic growth. Academic growth includes career choices. You cannot separate them; you are being guided as a person. A person receives all those things."

The counselor felt that students' personal and academic needs receive greatest emphasis in the program. She spoke of career needs receiving least emphasis because students at this age are too young to work. Using the DAT is the first step, in her view, to increase the emphasis on careers at this level so students will know more, including how much money they can make, and what courses and grades are needed in high school to reach a particular career goal. In her opinion, these data help students complete a more informed four-year course selection plan for high school. She suggested increasing materials and space devoted to career development, as well as educating teachers and administrators about the importance of providing more career focus at this age.

The principal believed that academics are addressed most by the counseling and guidance program, with career needs being least emphasized. He felt that schools generally are not as well prepared to deal with career needs compared with academic and personal development needs. With changes in society and the school-to-work program, his view was that emphasis on careers may need to increase. Similar to some

students interviewed, he perceived it to be hard to separate the three areas of needs because students may need help in all three; thus, the counselor would work on all three areas together. Ideally, he still felt the strongest focus should be on academics. However, he said, “I think you should have as much focus on the social/emotional kinds of things because for our age ... from 11 to 14, we are talking about a great change that takes place and a lot of things that kids are going through ... but I think the counselors should be seen as the experts in walking the students through some of those developmental changes.”

### **Emphasis in Allocating Services According to Comprehensive Model Components**

The counselor assigned approximately 25 percent of her time to each of the four TEA Comprehensive Model components, but added that she did not spend as much time on systems support as she did on the other components. She noted that she does not teach a developmental guidance curriculum. The principal thought that responsive services received the most counseling and guidance program emphasis—about 60 percent, with 15 percent each on guidance curriculum and individual planning and 10 percent on systems support. Ideally, he said, “I would place a high priority ... in guidance curriculum.” He suggested that 40 percent of counseling time should be spent on guidance curriculum, 30 percent on system support, and 15 percent each on responsive services and individual planning.

### **Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach**

Both counselor and principal agreed that the counseling and guidance program focused on intervention. In the counselor’s opinion, the ideal is to focus more on prevention activities, but with societal changes, such as increasing violence and her current workload, she did not feel a prevention focus was realistic. She saw offering students conflict resolution and peer mediation training as current preventive efforts. The principal wanted to change the program focus to prevention.

### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

In addition to increasing student reference materials and having another room separate from her office for working with students, the counselor suggested having more teacher staff development conducted by counse-

lors, as well as consultants to work with teachers on relevant counseling issues. Other than new PCs, the principal indicated that the counselors had not told him of other needs. The principal favored having district-level support for a preventive counseling and guidance program that includes goals and objectives, a clear job description for counselors, and use of guidance activities. He suggested the district adopt a comprehensive counseling and guidance program for all schools. The counselor supported continued involvement from the district in supplying relevant counseling materials. She mentioned the need to use more ESC resources.

The principal indicated that counselors and the community could work together better if counselors provided more training for parents, such as classes in what students in this age group go through and strategies for dealing with these issues. Through continuing community outreach activities, the counselor hopes to increase the involvement of parents who are reluctant about coming to school. She said, “It is real important that we work on our image to make these people see that we are receptive,” and she emphasized that open and honest communication with the community was essential for success. She further stated, “They [community members] need to know that I am here and I need them.” She believed that by working within the community, community members will get more involved and will bring parents with them. She envisioned having holistic neighborhood and community support for parents and supported the idea of accessing all youth services through one agency.

The counselor appreciated the continuing work of mentors from the community but stressed the need for Hispanic male mentors because Hispanic male students represent a disproportionately higher number of dropouts. Thus far, she reported not being successful in getting local Hispanic organizations to provide volunteer mentors. However, African American males have been very active in volunteering as mentors. Although Hispanic and African American females have volunteered as mentors, the counselor could use more, and White mentors are also needed. The counselor emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent, long term mentoring relationships with students. She said, “I told one group of young mentors, ‘Don’t come in and get my boys’ hopes up and then decide you would rather go on a date and abandon them.’ I want consistency because that is what they are looking for. You ask why their behaviors are in such disarray; you go to some of their homes, there

is no consistency. We may be the only stabilizing force that they have.”

Student focus group participants were familiar with the counselor and positive about their interactions with her. These students stated that she was always there for them when they needed to see her. One student noted that even when she goes to see the counselor at lunch time, the counselor is available and will see her. Another student said, “I like the way it is now. She does not smother you, but you know that she is there when you need her.” A third student remarked, “I mean one time she was really busy doing something else, and she told me I could just have five minutes,

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*“She [the counselor] is just on a level where you can understand.”*

—Student

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and she tried to help me with my problem, but she spent an hour with me—helping me with my problems.” Students mentioned contacting the counselor for academic needs, such as making schedule changes, and for personal problems, such as not getting along with a teacher. Students interviewed saw the counselor as a friend. One student stated, “She [the counselor] is just on a level where you can understand. You do not feel like you are talking to an adult—an authority figure.” These students emphasized that having a counselor is important even if they do not use her services: “It is just kind of nice to know that she is there if you need to talk to her.”

The majority of interviewed students concluded that no one group needed counseling and guidance services more than any other; it was based on individual needs. One student suggested that “the ordinary Joe” needs services as much as students having obvious problems, such as drug use. Another student remarked that everyone needs help. A third student thought students with low self-esteem or who come from broken homes need more counseling and guidance attention. Additional information about students’ perceptions of the counseling and guidance program are included in Table 10.2.

When asked how the counseling and guidance program could be improved, students offered their suggestions. Most wanted to add counselors because they felt that 480 students to counsel were too many for one

counselor. All students interviewed concurred that the counselor had many responsibilities, such as testing, scheduling, and paperwork, that interfered with her time to work with students. Students interviewed suggested these duties be reduced to allow more counseling time for them. One student suggested having two counselors — one for students with problems and another for class scheduling issues. Another said, “I think we need more people like her [the counselor].”

## Policy Concerns

### Characteristics and Indicators of Success

The principal and counselor described their ideas for indicators of a successful program.

- The counselor felt she could not define a successful counseling and guidance program, per se. Rather, she looks at success on a student-by-student basis. In her opinion, a successful program for each student is defined by services provided, how the student benefits, and how the program enriches his or her family.
- The principal believes a successful program focuses on prevention. In his view, counselors should use all student data and information available to plan training and activities, set objectives, and plan classroom guidance lessons for the year. This includes holding small group sessions for students with needs in areas such as improving self-esteem. Based on counselors’ needs assessments and yearly objectives, there should be feedback to verify program success. This includes positive parent feedback, improved student attitudes (not belligerence, anger, or indifference), decreased academic failures, and decreased disciplinary referrals to the principal’s office.

### Messages for Policy Makers

The counselor recommended that policy makers issue a written document defining counselors’ roles and responsibilities, stressing direct student services, excluding tasks such as scheduling students into classes and making schedule changes, and limiting paperwork. The roles and responsibilities delineated in the TEA Comprehensive Model should be used for all counselors as long as salaries match the increased responsibility, according to the counselor. The counselor said, “I think we are the step children of the

**Table 10.2**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance**  
**at Campus #10**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor helps me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	9	—	1
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	6	—	4
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	7	—	3
D. understand the good things about my homework.	—	2	8
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	6	—	4
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	2	—	8
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	2	—	8
2. I am excited about the work we are doing in the guidance program	10	—	—
3. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.	9	1	—
4. I see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	1	8	1
5. The counselor is fun to be around.	10	—	—

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

district. You know, everybody knows you are there, and you do everything for everybody, but it is a thankless job. It is. And, of course we need more money, but I think our jobs need to be treated with some distinction, too. I mean, a lot of times I feel counselors are pretty much taken for granted. Sure, they are, you know, like a comfortable pair of shoes, they are always there.” The principal agreed that counselors feel they are the forgotten group because whenever schools are mentioned, it’s always in terms of administrators and teachers, with counselors not seen as part of either group. In his view, the professional status of counselors is unclear, and their positions are largely invisible. He concluded that policy makers should focus more on the services that counselors provide and, when discussing school staff, mention counselors specifically, in addition to teachers and administrators.

The principal also recommended that state policy makers adopt the TEA Comprehensive Model so counseling and guidance programs will be consistent statewide. In his view, this would result in clear goals

and objectives to be used for evaluating counseling and guidance programs, as well as counselors, making both more accountable. He stressed the need for district support in using preventive guidance activities with students.

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*“I feel counselors are pretty much taken for granted . . . like a comfortable pair of shoes, they are always there.”*

—Counselor

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### Potential Areas for Policy Attention

Potential areas for policy attention are based on responses from interviewees.

- Pay counselors at a level commensurate with their responsibilities.

- Give counselors the same professional respect and identity as administrators and teachers, by including counselors specifically in any policy statements concerning school staff at both the district and state levels.
- Eliminate non-counseling/non-guidance duties from counselors' responsibilities.
- Put counselors' duties and responsibilities in writing, with a focus on direct counseling and guidance services to students.
- Adopt the TEA Comprehensive Model for all schools statewide.
- Provide an adequate student-to-counselor ratio so all students receive needed services.
- Have district central offices support a comprehensive, developmental counseling and guidance program.
- Provide more clerical/data entry support staff to counselors to help free them from paperwork and increase their counseling time with students.
- Strengthen counselor training and curricula to better train counselors to meet the increased social and personal needs of today's students.

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## CHAPTER 5

# High School Case Studies

## Summary

### Characteristics of Campuses Selected

All six high school campuses in the study served Grades 9-12. They had from two to 10 counselors. The campuses were located in major urban, major suburban, independent town, non-metropolitan stable, and other central city districts. All six districts had below average district wealth. The number of students enrolled on these campuses ranged from 659 to 2,838, with three of the campuses having over 2,000 students. On the 1995 statewide accountability system, three received ratings of *Acceptable*, and three received ratings of *Low Performing*. One-third to one-half of the students were economically disadvantaged. The ethnic composition of the student populations varied from 0 percent to 35 percent African American; 24 percent to 83 percent Hispanic; 11 percent to 41 percent White; and 1 percent to 14 percent other minorities. The following summary is based on information from the six high school campuses. Case study reports for three of the campuses also are included in this chapter.

### High School Counseling and Guidance Programs

#### Goals and Expectations

At all six high school campuses, there was a district counseling and guidance mission developed by counselors districtwide, with input from parents, teachers, and administrators. Counselors indicated these missions may be adjusted slightly to best fit campus needs. All six missions were student-centered, with four of the six missions to be implemented through use of the TEA Comprehensive Model. The missions focused on preparing students to be successful adults, living up to their potential. The counseling and guidance program was seen as a facilitating agent to help meet all of a student's needs including social,

emotional, physical, mental, personal, and academic. In addition to building students' self-esteem and keeping them in school, the campuses' counseling and guidance philosophies center around helping students develop skills to be self-directed, to make good decisions, to work successfully with others in an increasingly complex society, to overcome obstacles, and to pursue post-high school training and/or education. Most included the successful involvement of parents in their missions.

For the campuses using the TEA Comprehensive Model, meeting its expectations were important. Generally interviewees expected the counselor to be someone who is there to help each student with whatever he or she needs to be successful; to care about students and be their friend; to listen and guide students about school and the future; to be a student advocate and mediate between teachers and students and administrators and students; to provide both counseling and guidance services; to place each student in classes where he or she can be successful; and to help parents find community resources. At all six campuses, one or more interviewees mentioned that some parents and community members have too high, and sometimes unrealistic, expectations of what the counselor can do. Some participants saw these expectations as reflecting the social problems of society today. Several interviewees mentioned that many community members may not know what the counseling and guidance program does.

#### Campus Implementation

Although individual campus programs showed many variations, there was overlap in many of the areas addressed. At all six campuses, counselors reported conducting individual counseling sessions with students on areas of personal, academic, or career concerns; these sessions were frequently due to crises. In some of the larger communities, there were local

agencies or services that counselors could refer students to for more in-depth counseling in areas such as drug or alcohol addiction, pregnancy, and dropout prevention. At several campuses, one or more counselors were specialized to deal with certain groups, such as migrant students, students receiving special education services, students with substance abuse problems, and students in a deaf education program. At two campuses, there were on-campus staff (a community support specialist or an intervention specialist) or programs (such as Communities in Schools) that could either provide more in-depth counseling services for students or find outside services to meet students' needs. Three campuses reported group counseling for students with similar needs in areas such as self-esteem, motivation, interpersonal skills, self-responsibility, conflict mediation, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, gang prevention, cross-cultural differences, pregnant teens and teen mothers, and students at risk of dropping out. At three campuses, counselors coordinated one or more peer counseling groups, where trained students work with other students often in the areas of conflict resolution and peer mediation.

At all six high school campuses, counselors were extensively involved in activities to inform students about various careers or professions and training, college, and university options after high school. All campuses had a career/college center in their office areas or had a room specifically set aside for this; one campus had a full-time paraprofessional staffing this center. At these centers or areas, students could look through college catalogs and handbooks, books, materials, and videos on career options, training, post-high school options, and other topics of interest to high school students such as conflict resolution, pregnancy, substance abuse, study skills, and self-esteem. At some campuses, there were computers (PCs) available that had some college catalogs and handbooks on-line for student use. At one campus, there was software available that students could use to prepare letters of application to colleges.

At all six campuses, counselors made announcements over the loudspeaker system about college, career, training, or scholarship information, or they visited classrooms and talked to students about these opportunities. Also, counselors posted information on scholarship and financial aid information. Most campuses reported that counselors visited all senior classes or had individual conferences with seniors about their interests and opportunities. At two campuses, one counselor coordinated a program with the local

community college where students could enter a joint program and earn both high school and college credits simultaneously. At one campus, a counselor reported running the General Educational Development (GED) testing program on campus where students who were dropping out were encouraged to go. The counselor also called former students who had dropped out to encourage them to return to complete high school with a GED certificate. Counselors at all six campuses work with seniors and their families on completing college applications, scholarship and financial aid applications, and letters of recommendation for students.

Counselors at the six campuses also arrange for a college and career fair, day, or night where local colleges (including community colleges) and universities, military representatives, vocational training, and business representatives meet together at the school to present available opportunities and options to students and their families. Counselors may also arrange trips for students to visit college campuses. If college representatives are traveling through the area, the counselor will often arrange to have the representative talk with interested students. Nearly all counselors reported being involved in at least one program where students had structured opportunities to learn about specific professions. These included (a) mentoring programs, where students work with a community representative to learn more about a career; (b) shadowing programs where seniors go to local businesses to learn about various professions; (c) school to work programs; and (d) apprenticeship and intern programs where students work at local businesses. All counselors reported spending time making contacts with businesses, colleges and universities, military representatives, and community and service organizations to learn about and create opportunities for students.

Although teaching guidance lessons was very limited at all six high schools, counselors did visit classrooms to orient ninth graders to high school; to inform students of graduation requirements, scheduling, and course information; to advise seniors about future options and opportunities; to give students testing information and teach study and test-taking skills; and to talk about peer pressure and teach self-concept and self-esteem lessons. Some counselors also mentioned showing videos to groups of students on topics such as suicide prevention and sexual harassment.

At five of the six campuses, the counselors were responsible for academic advising and scheduling

students each semester into classes that were best suited for those students. This usually involved consulting with both teachers and students before scheduling students into particular classes each semester, making schedule changes throughout the semester, and looking up students' schedules when requested by school staff or parents. One or more of the participating counselors also evaluated transcripts, registered or preregistered students, computed class rank, balanced class size, or other related duties. At four campuses, computers and software were in place so counselors could do this electronically. At the campus where counselors were not responsible for scheduling, counselors worked closely with the assistant principal in charge of this process.

Counselors were responsible for the testing programs on four campuses. This included administration and coordination of the fall and spring Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test, the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), advanced placement testing, end-of-course and/or end-of-year testing, testing of students receiving bilingual or English as a second language (ESL) instruction, and testing for identification of gifted and talented students. Although they did not administer either the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT), counselors (at all six schools) were responsible for preparing students for these tests, encouraging them to take these tests, providing information on where and when the testing would occur, and helping students find financial aid if they could not afford the testing fees. Test administration tasks required a great deal of time, paperwork, and clerical tasks, such as counting TAAS booklets. Even where counselors were not responsible for the TAAS administration, they reported being involved in helping in some way such as proctoring.

Counselors at all six high school campuses conducted transition activities, including visiting feeder schools and conducting orientations with eighth graders who would be the incoming ninth graders. Some high school counselors worked with the student and his or her middle school counselor on a four-year high school plan. Eighth graders were also given a tour of the high school, and high schools held meetings for parents of the incoming freshmen to inform them about high school.

All campuses had one or more counselors involved in special education counseling services. At four of the campuses, there was a special education or vocational

counselor in the counseling and guidance department who handled the needs of students receiving special education services. At a fifth campus, the special education counselor was in the special education department. At the one remaining campus, the regular counselors handled services for students receiving special education services. All indicated that involvement in the special education process (Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARDs), Individual Education Plans (IEPs), referral to programs under section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, etc.) was extremely time consuming, and several counselors mentioned that many students and their families had many needs.

In addition to the above listed duties, counselors were responsible for a wide variety of other activities, including coordinating parental involvement and student mentoring programs. All counselors interviewed reported extensive networking with teachers, school and community service providers, administrators, and local college, business, and military representatives.

Counselors, teachers, administrators, and parents on all six high school campuses felt that all the counselors had many responsibilities, especially many that required much paperwork, and that as a result their time to provide direct counseling and guidance services to students often was limited. This was seen as true at campuses where there was a registrar, a testing coordinator, and/or someone else responsible for scheduling. Adult participants agreed that counselors were asked to perform duties that should not be part of their job. Counselors felt their caseloads were too high, and they wanted to (a) be more visible and available to all students, (b) educate students about what counseling and guidance services were available, and (c) spend more time seeking out students who may be shy about going to a counselor, but who have needs. Generally the counselors were positive about the TEA Comprehensive Model, but felt they were doing much more than indicated in the model, especially with non-counseling/guidance duties such as testing and scheduling. All reported they wanted to offer a program that was more proactive and preventive but had little time to do more preventive activities. The interviewed counselors expressed frustration about not having enough time to meet all the students' needs.

All six high school counseling and guidance programs have students referred for services by counselors, teachers, administrators, parents, and students themselves. Counselors also make frequent contacts with

teachers and use their contacts with students to assess student needs and to see if those needs are being met. At three of the six schools, counselors are assigned to students in the freshman or sophomore class and stay with these students for the next three or four years. This was seen as a way to follow students' progress, assess any changing needs, and try to meet identified needs. Counselors work closely with teachers and students to place students in the right courses, beginning with eighth grade students before they arrive at high school. Counselors also talk with students about their career plans and post-high school goals and aspirations, and advise them about future options. Counselors help teachers address students' needs by providing materials to teach lessons in areas such as stress management and study skills. One campus reported that the needs assessment process takes place at the district level through the strategic planning process. At another, the counselors meet weekly with the campus administrators to discuss students' needs, and attend each parent teacher conference.

At all six campuses, there was a secretary or clerk assigned to the counseling and guidance program at least part of the time. One counseling and guidance department had three full-time secretaries. Other staff in at least one of the counseling and guidance departments included an at-risk coordinator, a career technician, a community support specialist, and an intervention specialist. While not part of the counseling and guidance program, other staff at two campuses who handled testing, scheduling, and registration were a resource to the counseling and guidance department. All counselors at five of the campuses had their own PC with a printer or were networked to a printer. The software varied across campuses, with all having word processing software and some networked to student databases and scheduling software. On the campus where counselors did not have their own PCs, this was a district policy decision rather than a resource issue, and PCs or computers were made available to them in another area. A variety of materials were available on all six campuses, including college catalogs, videos, books, and other resources for students to learn about colleges, career options, and issues such as self-esteem, suicide, teen pregnancy, substance abuse prevention, and conflict resolution. All interviewed counselors had a materials budget to buy additional counseling and guidance materials for students. At two campuses, this budget also was used for counselors' attendance at counselor-specific training.

The student-to-counselor ratio on the six campuses ranged from 331 to 1, to 202 to 1, according to PEIMS data. However, a number of factors contributed to counselors having larger or more variable caseloads than represented by these student-to-counselor ratios. These included vacant counselor positions, department heads included in the ratio though they had small or no student caseloads, and counselors assigned to a group of students (such as special education or migrant students), regardless of the size of that group.

Four of the six high schools had a district counseling and guidance director or coordinator, and three had districtwide counseling and guidance programs with guidance curriculum, guidelines, and timelines, although the campuses were not always using the district's adopted guidance curriculum. Three campuses mentioned attending monthly districtwide counselors meetings. Districts varied in other staff and services available to assist with the campus counseling and guidance program. District-level staff included a district at-risk coordinator, social workers for referrals for community services, and a career advisor to talk to students about career and post-high school options and to meet with and assist parents and students with college and scholarship/financial aid applications. One district has an alternative school and provides materials and videos for the school's substance abuse counselor. Campus counseling staff also have access to district professional development centers, a districtwide career exploration program, and districtwide planning and transition support. Counselors reported little or no use of their regional Education Service Centers (ESC).

Adult participants reported that parental involvement with the counseling and guidance program was lower than they would like. Counselors felt they reached out to parents regularly but not always with success. Counselors reported that parents were invited to incoming Grade 9 orientation meetings, career or college fairs or nights, and/or financial aid workshops. Counselors reported that some parents were very involved, especially parents the counselors had called because of student discipline or truancy problems. The school that reported the most success had (a) parent volunteer programs, (b) parent newsletters and an orientation manual that were prepared by the counselors, and (c) required parents to pick up students' report cards.

The six counselors interviewed reported a wide variety of involvement with colleges and universities, and

businesses and other organizations, in programs or activities to provide students with information and encourage them to attend college, offer concurrent college enrollment and credit, and assist in filling out college and financial aid applications. At all schools, local businesses or organizations and military representatives also helped students learn about careers and career opportunities, and provided shadowing, mentoring, apprenticeships, or job training that allowed students to experience what certain occupations or jobs would be like. At one campus, local businesses formed a partnership with the high school to provide a college scholarship program paid for by the businesses. Five of the six campuses reported working with a wide variety of community agencies or organizations to provide social services to students and their families who were outside the school's scope. One campus did not do this due to a lack of agencies and programs in the local community. One school had a large population of military dependents, and the counselor worked closely with military resources to meet the needs of these dependents. One campus also reported a wide range of volunteer and other programs available for students and their families. A Communities in Schools program on one campus worked with students identified as being at risk, providing a number of programs based on these students' needs. Also at one campus, the counselors work with local private school staff to successfully move private school students into public schools when students or their parents choose to make this transition.

## **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

Consistent with elementary and middle school counselors interviewed, high school counselors interviewed saw that the problems of our society have increased, becoming more complex and diverse, as well as more serious. Not only are social and personal problems of students increasing, but the problems are often crises that the counselor and school must deal with before they can address that student's academic needs. Students today are seen as more needy than in the past, and there are more students needing counseling services. Problems perceived as having increased include single-parent families, parents lacking parenting skills, dysfunctional families, and child abuse; sexually active students and teen pregnancy;

violence, including suicide and gang involvement; students dealing with the occult; apathy, hostility, and low self-esteem of students; drug and alcohol abuse; and students lacking personal social skills, such as respect for others and taking responsibility for their own behavior. Counselors saw a greater need for training of students in areas such as character education and conflict resolution. Adult participants at the majority of campuses saw that some parents and community members expected the counselors to serve as parent surrogates and solve parents' problems as well as students'.

At all six campuses, both students and adults interviewed indicated that the academically able students and those who were college bound received a lot of the counselors' attention. Average students were seen, however, to need more counseling and guidance attention. Other students mentioned as needing more attention included students at higher risk of dropping out, such as pregnant girls; students with poor grades; students with low self-esteem and motivation; Hispanic males; potential gang members; students who were not assertive about seeking counseling services; students with problems at home or who lack parental support; highly mobile students; students receiving special education services; and students with limited English proficiency. Students interviewed wanted the counselors to be more available to all students. Students suggested that counselors need to be more visible to all students by having assemblies, visiting classrooms, and other venues where each student sees his or her counselor frequently and the counselor explains what services the counseling and guidance program can provide. Students wanted more group counseling offered to students having similar problems such as divorce, and they suggested more counseling and guidance attention should be addressed to meeting students' personal needs. Many students felt some students had misconceptions about what the counselor did, and eliminating these would increase students' tendencies to seek out help when needed. All students and adults interviewed wanted to have more counselors on their campuses so that all students could be reached.

All six campuses wanted to add more counselors and additional clerical help assigned specifically to the counseling and guidance program. The clerical help would relieve counselors of many clerical and administrative tasks and free their time for more direct student services. Additional counselors would allow the counseling and guidance programs to focus more

on prevention, including having more time to teach guidance lessons. Counselors could be more visible and available to all students for individual and group counseling, have time to follow-up with students after they received services, and better meet students' personal needs and have more time to work with and reach out to parents. Participants also wanted additional counselors to work with specific groups of students, such as freshmen, special education students, students at risk of dropping out of school, or students in crisis situations. Scheduling and testing coordinators were wanted to relieve counselors of these duties. The staff on one campus would like to add a full-time social worker. The largest requested budget increases are reflected in the additional staff requested; at three of the campuses, these staff additions were the only budget additions participants mentioned wanting. Counselors on the remaining campuses wanted computers for each counselor, including hardware and/or software for word processing, scheduling, registration, and related tasks; and better access to information on post-high school options for students. Budget increases also were wanted to buy more guidance materials, including instructional videos, student handouts, and college handbooks; to secure more office space for the counseling and guidance program; to obtain more counselor-specific staff development; and to permit counselors to visit more colleges and universities to establish ties that would help students.

Counselors and principals all reported one or more non-counseling/guidance duty performed by counselors, especially clerical and administrative tasks, most of which have been described. Key areas of concern for participants included testing, scheduling, registration, and special education processes. Each of these required extensive paperwork completion. Counselors without computers on their desks reported excessive time spent going to and from their offices to use a computer located elsewhere. While not a non-counseling/guidance duty, counselors reported that working with seniors took a tremendous amount of time, especially in completing applications and writing letters of recommendation. Another area of frustration mentioned by most counselors was how their schedules were frequently disrupted by handling crises or other interruptions, thus having to make up the lost time elsewhere. All counselors reported working extra hours to get their work done, and taking paperwork home to complete. For the interviewed counselors, their problems stemmed not just from the paperwork related to their various duties, but

more fundamentally because they had too many duties and responsibilities in general while the needs of students were so great.

High school counselors reported they made little or no use of their regional ESC. Counselors and principals would like ESCs to provide high quality professional development, specifically for counselors, on areas such as divorce, substance abuse, alcoholism, teen pregnancy, and how to get parents involved with the school program. Other suggestions included letting counselors know of ESC resources, providing relevant videos, giving counselors expert advice, providing consultants to help counselors, and serving as a forum to educate the community about counselors' roles and responsibilities.

In addition to providing staff and resources discussed above, it was suggested that districts could assist campuses by educating school staff and the community about the local counseling and guidance program and the role of the counselor. Upgrading technology is another way in which campus staff thought districts could improve campus counseling and guidance programs.

All participants wanted increased parental involvement with the counseling and guidance program, their children's education, and school, including visiting the school more frequently. Most of the campuses wanted to reach out to parents even more but felt this would be hard to do without more staff or volunteer help. Most frequently counselors wanted to educate parents about the school's counseling and guidance program and how it can help their children, and about how important parents are in the educational process. Several participants want to offer parenting classes so more parents can be supportive of their children and build their self-esteem and confidence, as well as ensuring that the school is "user-friendly" and welcoming to parents. Others want parents to take more responsibility at home and educate themselves about the course choices that students have, and then take an active role with their children. One school is trying a four-year plan beginning with incoming freshmen, such that parents will have to sign both students' schedules and their report cards. Teachers at this campus also will call parents twice during each six-weeks period to report on something positive about each child. The campus that reported success in getting parents to come to school to pick up report cards plans to continue this effort.

High school counselors would like to have all community resources for youth coordinated to save school staff time in finding the right services for students and their families. As with parents, participants at all six campuses would like community members, businesses, and organizations more involved with the counseling and guidance program. In the area of careers and jobs, it was suggested that businesses provide more mentors for students, more job training and apprenticeship opportunities, more speakers about various jobs and careers, and help in establishing a career center. For the community in general, participants would like more community members to volunteer to help by mentoring students in need, doing clerical work for the counselor, referring students in need of counseling help, and contacting parents of students who are absent from school. Because of students' great personal needs, one principal suggested that the community needs to provide even more resources where students can be referred for services. Several participants would like the community to be more active in informing parents that teachers and counselors welcome their participation, and educating parents about the role of the counselor.

Participants at the six high school campuses had differing opinions about which of three areas—academic, career, or personal/developmental—received the most emphasis and attention in the counseling and guidance program. Student participants at all six campuses felt that the main areas they saw their counselors about were academic concerns and/or academic needs and career development. Students reported seeing counselors least about personal issues. Overall, the student and adult participants felt that students' academic, career, and personal needs intertwined, and ideally students' personal needs should be addressed more, so all three areas would receive good coverage.

Although the actual percentage of time each participant assigned as being spent on each of the four components of the TEA Comprehensive Model varied, across all six sites, participants saw the largest percentage of time being spent on responsive services and individual planning, with a smaller percentage of time being spent on system support and guidance curriculum activities. When asked how they would ideally allocate time to each of the four components, generally the participants decreased the percentage of time spent in either responsive services or individual planning or both, and increased the percentage of time devoted to guidance curriculum. Where interviewees had indi-

cated that counselors devoted time to duties outside these four areas, ideally they eliminated or greatly reduced this time and reassigned it to one of the four components. One campus had done two time-use studies where counselors kept time logs of activities in each of the four areas, plus their non-guidance duties. The results were consistent with those reported above. The largest percentage of counselors' time was spent on individual planning, followed by responsive services (together comprising 67 to 75 percent of the available time). The percentage of time devoted to guidance curriculum activities was less than 10 percent.

At all six campuses, the majority of the counseling and guidance programs' time was dedicated to intervention activities, especially those dealing with crises, interruptions, and other activities that called for immediate attention. All participants, especially the counselors, agreed that being proactive was needed for a truly successful counseling and guidance program. However, without more staff (counselors, other professionals or paraprofessionals, and clerical help), a program focused on prevention would not be possible. All wanted to provide more guidance lessons in the classrooms because they saw great needs in students such as inadequate social skills, study skills, or conflict resolution skills. Most also wanted to spend more time on parent training and other parent outreach activities. One counselor reported that, even if she and her fellow counselors had sufficient time to conduct classroom guidance lessons, teachers did not currently allow counselors to take class time for non-academic lessons because teachers were under such pressure to have students meet the demanding state requirements for graduation. Generally the counselors liked the TEA Comprehensive Model, but felt that currently its requirements were hard to meet at the high school level.

## Policy Concerns

### Areas for Policy Attention

Participants from the six high school campuses support the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC, although the model does not reflect all that high school counselors do. They perceived the need to lower the student-to-counselor ratio and provide more support staff. The need to relieve counselors of non-guidance duties such as scheduling and registration, and to streamline the paperwork through improved technology, was heard repeatedly. High

school counselors saw a need to provide greater recognition of the importance of their work. Not only did high school participants want to remove responsibility for test administration from counselors, they also identified the amount of testing and emphasis on TAAS test performance as policy concerns. In addition to providing clerical support and improved technology, funding issues focused on lower student-to-counselor ratios and counselor staff development. Education service centers were seen as a source for increased and improved training for counselors. The need to educate and increase support from parents and the community was mentioned by several high school participants.

### **Characteristics of Successful Programs**

The high school participants in this study identified a number of program indicators such as low student-to-counselor ratios, sufficient support staff, ongoing needs assessments, programs focused on prevention, and programs that emphasize the personal needs of students as well as the academic needs. Some characteristics of successful guidance and counseling programs consistently emphasized include counselors developing close alliances with teachers and linking their work with students in the classroom; creating conditions for collaboration with all school staff in improving student performance, and understanding

and addressing changing student needs; and developing collaborations with parents and the community to meet student needs. Successful programs also are characterized by counselors who serve as advocates for students and are at the center of schoolwide efforts to improve student achievement.

The high school participants identified parent involvement, communication, and satisfaction as important for a successful guidance and counseling program. They stressed the need to address student needs holistically, balancing personal/developmental needs and academic needs in an integrated program. The study participants also identified a wide range of student outcomes as indicators of program success. These include improved test performance and increased enrollment in upper level courses; improved attendance, decreased retentions, lower dropout rates, and higher graduation rates; increased numbers of students taking advanced placement and SAT and ACT examinations, receiving scholarships, and being accepted into colleges; students being better prepared to make decisions and cope with problems; and success after graduation, whether in a career, the military, or college. Interviewees also identified having a support system with community resources, and average students receiving needed attention, as indicators of success.

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## **High School: Campus 13**

### **Background**

#### **Campus Characteristics**

This campus is located in a district in a large city with lower than average district wealth. It has about 2,160 students enrolled in Grades 9-12. Under the 1995 accountability system, academic performance at this campus was rated *Acceptable*, a rating received by the majority of campuses statewide. Table 13.1 summarizes characteristics of the students, teachers, and counselors.

#### **Interview Sources**

A one-on-one interview was conducted with the principal and the head counselor of the counseling and

guidance department. Adult and student focus groups were conducted as well. The adult focus group consisted of 10 participants, including two counselors, a parent, a university outreach program coordinator, a diagnostician, a technical preparation coordinator, a Communities in Schools (CIS) representative, an administrator, and two teachers. The student group consisted of eleven students in Grades 9-12.

### **Campus Counseling and Guidance Program**

#### **Development and History on Campus**

The principal explained that a guidance plan patterned after the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Comprehensive Model has been implemented at a district level.

Table 13.1 Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #13				
Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	0%	1%	Number of Counselor Positions	10
Hispanic	83%	54%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	1
White	16%	45%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	216:1
Other Minority	1%	1%	Number of Teachers	152
Economically Disadvantaged	50%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	12 Years
Limited English Proficient	27%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.

Note: Ethnicity percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

When discussing the development of their campus' counseling and guidance program, the counselor explained that the Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC) is used to evaluate and define the school counselors' roles. In the principal's view, guidelines are good to orient the overall direction of the program, but, ultimately, goals are made concrete within the context of students' individual needs. In his words, "It is good to have something in format to get consensus and get everybody to go in the right direction, but our ultimate philosophy here is to be student centered—one student at a time—and then we're going to do whatever we need to do to assure that the student is placed in a position that he or she can be successful; the environment and the family [are part of it]."

The district's philosophy, according to the counselor, is that all students can learn and that, together, the counseling and guidance team can make a difference in the quality of students' lives. When discussing the mission for the school's counseling and guidance program the counselor referred to findings of a study conducted in 1992-93 to find out how counselors were spending their time. They found that at the high school level, a substantial amount of time was spent on individual planning and non-guidance activities, and little time was allocated to guidance curriculum and systems support. Based on the survey findings and following state recommendations, changes to the program were implemented and a district-level division of counseling was established with additional clerical staff and computers. The principal explained that funding was lost the following year resulting in the loss of personnel, "For whatever reason after we lost our superintendent, they cut back on it."

## Goals and Expectations

The principal and counselor explained that they subscribe to the goals and expectations embedded in the TEA Comprehensive Model for responsive services and individual planning components. They both recognized that guidance curriculum and system support are important, but the needs of their student population require that emphasis be placed on respon-

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*"We're going to do whatever we need to do to assure that the student is placed in a position that he or she can be successful."*

—Principal

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sive services and individual planning. They referred specifically to the needs of students from migrant families and those who have disabilities. Discussing the program's goal, the counselor said that, as a team, they should pool resources for students and make them available on campus. If needed, she added, multiple counselors will work with one student to address different needs (e.g., vocational versus academic).

The focus group participants said that they expect the counseling and guidance department to ensure students' success. For instance, one parent and the Communities in Schools (CIS) representative said that the purpose of the department is to help students meet their goals. The university outreach coordinator reiterated the belief that all students can learn and that the counseling and guidance program must make a difference in supporting each student through the

learning process. A teacher said that the counselors are expected to be there as a resource for them.

The principal said that, in his experience, the counselors' role has changed for the better. In the past, counselors were expected to do clerical work; today there is more emphasis on actual counseling and working with students because students' needs have changed. Counselors have had to confront this situation and have accepted the responsibility to provide youth with guidance because the needs are great. In the principal's view, the counselors have had to "take over for what's not happening at home, and that's a big change from just strictly academic."

The head counselor related the contrast between the expectations she held about her job when she was hired and the duties she performs. She expected to perform group and individual counseling and suggested that this is not the case because the counseling department is expected to implement new strategies and initiatives every time a need arises at the campus level. "Anything that's new and any program that the school wants to initiate is given to the counseling department. I was in charge of sexual harassment training for some reason instead of it going to the administrator." This fluctuating environment provides little continuity for the work that counselors are expected to accomplish and entails many administrative and clerical responsibilities. She reported that she finds herself spending a considerable amount of time doing paperwork and testing; counselors spend 20 percent of their time on non-direct service tasks that involve paperwork and testing. The principal and assistant principal contribute significant amounts of time to discipline referrals, such as maintaining a computer database of information on referrals. However, counselors are responsible for the parent conferences concerning discipline referrals. Because it is a big high school, the demand for these services is time-consuming.

The students eligible for services under section 504 of federal law and their parents' needs were reported to be particularly demanding of counselors' time. Students with disabilities are referred to 504 programs for academic or behavioral problems. This part of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act is to assure non-discrimination of students with disabilities in receiving educational opportunities and benefits equal to those provided students without disabilities. The mandated procedures involve a lengthy process of referral, evaluation, accommodation, follow-up, review, and complaint resolution. A number of meetings are involved, and

each step of the process must be thoroughly documented, both of which are very time-consuming. The head counselor explained that although they have a specialty counselor devoted to this, the amount of detail involved requires more staff. When the principal was asked if he would hire another counselor, he said that he would just for the students in 504 programs. The counselor added that the department also spends a considerable amount of time in individual planning and academic guidance with the top students. In her words, the most time-consuming tasks are "changing schedules; it is just a lengthy process."

The principal felt that one consequence new social problems have had on the role of the counselor has been to turn him or her into a 'mother figure,' not only for students but also for parents and community members. The counselor sees the school and, more specifically, the counseling department as an organization available to address social demands and changes within the community. For instance, counselors face a diverse range of needs and social problems such as teen pregnancy, gang involvement, students dealing with the occult, and suicide attempts. The counselor said, "We just have to take one day at a time and address the needs and issues of those particular students on that given day."

### Campus Implementation

The principal relies on the head counselor to design and implement the counseling and guidance program. He also said that counselors develop individual, specific, and measurable goals. The head counselor said that counselors also are expected to attend monthly districtwide meetings that address strategic planning issues and goal setting. She said that the principal's involvement is critical in that he assigns the budget and allocates resources.

The principal reported that counselors hold an orientation at the beginning of the year and follow-up with classroom visits throughout the year. They also manage small groups dealing with issues such as self-esteem and abuse. The program offers individual counseling and supplements its activities by bringing in outside organizations that offer similar services dealing with dropout prevention, death and grief, substance abuse, and mentoring. The principal described a conflict resolution group that brings in students who belong to cliques, including gangs, and a program dealing with motivation issues for "regular" students. Counselors collaborate with university

outreach program staff, who make regular visits to the school to encourage all students to pursue a higher education. In addition, the principal expects counselors to “constantly update” parents and students about any change in any of the tests. The head counselor mentioned that there is a campus General Educational Development (GED) testing program that is an alternative to students dropping out; they are channeled toward the GED program in hopes that they will continue with technical training.

The principal and the head counselor described a student assistance program that provides financial assistance to students who need clothing, testing fees (for Scholastic Assessment Tests [SAT] and Advanced Placement [AP] tests), or caps and gowns, and subsidizes students’ trips to colleges and universities around the state. A core team process that brings together teachers, administrators, and nurses to refer troubled students to the appropriate service started as a pilot project through the student assistant program. The core team meets twice a week to discuss students’ progress and search for alternative solutions if the current ones are not working. The principal was excited about this program and added that his personal goal is to see that the core team process is implemented districtwide.

The principal expressed enthusiasm when he described the department’s commitment to team work. The student body is divided alphabetically with each counselor assigned a portion of the alphabet. As a result, all of the counselors work with students at all levels. The counselors know how students have been doing since the ninth grade and support them all the way through to graduation. In the principal’s view, having students divided alphabetically has provided cohesiveness, where all work as one team.

According to one teacher, the key to the implementation of the counseling and guidance program’s mission is increasing students’ awareness of program services. Students agreed that all students are not aware of the program’s services. Students also expressed a need for more counselor time. They explained that they see the counselor when they get pulled out of class, not during classroom visits, assemblies, or presentations. One student said, “There is never enough [time]. If you get called out because—I don’t know why—you just get called out, or ... if you have a question and go by and leave a note, then you will be pulled out of class. But as far as there being a class [guidance

curriculum] or anything like that, I can’t think of anything like that.” The head counselor also mentioned that there is conflict between counselors and teachers because the only way a counselor has access to students is during class periods. The teacher agreed that effective implementation of the program would require enhancing communication with teachers.

The principal and head counselor said that the counseling and guidance department has six academic and four specialty counselors and that the staff reflects the diversity of the student population. The specialty counselors work with students in special education, students from migrant families, and vocational students. The head counselor mentioned that there is a registrar on campus but counselors are responsible for transcripts. She also said that although the department has three secretaries, they need additional clerical assistance. A district social worker comes to campus one day a week and is shared by four counselors. The need for more social workers was expressed by the head counselor repeatedly, “There is a greater need for social workers on our campus, but the funding is not there to add social workers. We share one with different schools.” Another district resource that she mentioned was a district-wide guidance coordinator who works with each campus. The counselors, principal, staff, and parent in the adult focus group agreed that the counseling and guidance program needs to be supplemented by more clerical support and possibly more counselors. The head counselor and principal explained that the case load varies among the academic, the specialty, and the head counselor. Under ideal conditions, the head counselor would add two more academic counselors without losing specialty counselors. She also would add a secretary, a full-time social worker, and a counselor for students at risk to supplement the work done by the CIS program. The principal felt an additional counselor was required to decrease the current case load because the school has the largest number of students in the 504/Rehabilitation programs in the area.

Both the head counselor and principal judged the budget for the counseling and guidance program, which was \$10,000 this year and will be increased to \$15,000 next year, as adequate for the department’s needs. With this budget, the department has purchased computers, support programs, printers, and professional staff development travel for conferences. There is a reserve available for expenses such as supplementing students’ testing fees. Counselors would like to add software to their new computer system to stream-

line the time-consuming process of checking transcripts and pre-registering students. The principal felt the computers have already saved time. Another resource that the department counts on is a permanent area for presentations and where college catalogs, videos, college guides, books, and information on conflict resolution are available to students.

When issues concerning supply and demand of counselors were discussed, the principal and head counselor both judged the supply of counselors as

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*“You know that most of the time if there is a school problem, there is a family problem.”*

—Principal

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“good,” but found a shortage when it comes to specialized counselors such as those certified in sign language. The counselor said that whenever she applied for a position she obtained it. She had been a special education counselor, a migrant counselor, an academic counselor, and currently holds the head counselor position at this campus. When she applied for her current position, there was only that one position available, and she said there were many applicants: “I’d say a lot of competition.” The principal added that teachers are the pool for hiring counselors. Describing the ideal counselor, he said that above all, he or she needs to be a caring person. Beyond empathy, he added that he would prefer people who are adept with computers and have good organizational skills. He also expressed a need for a “vibrant” team of counselors and defined this as encompassing a diversity of talents.

When the head counselor discussed the role of the community in supporting the school’s counseling and guidance department, she said that little is known about what counselors do and that counselors are the first to be blamed if something goes wrong. She added that in spite of this, within the school setting and the community of people who do have contact with counselors, counselors are well-respected. For instance, the principal’s support to enhance their student-centered capacity stems from the fact that he directly attributed the reduction in the school’s dropout rate to counselors’ efforts. A similar perception was shared by most of the participants in the focus group, concerning their experiences of what

counselors have done for them (parent, teachers, university outreach coordinator, CIS representative). The principal agreed that paperwork and scheduling interfere most with the counselors’ time in spite of his efforts to minimize these by investing in the computer system, having a registrar, taking care of discipline referrals along with the assistant principal, and assigning testing coordination and administration to the dean of instruction.

In terms of community resources the principal mentioned a local substance abuse clinic that provides training on treatment of chemical dependence. The counselor mentioned using community resources such as a university outreach program, organizations that promote academic excellence, and a club that trains students as peer mediators. Among other examples of school-based community resources, she mentioned state universities’ concurrent enrollment programs that allow students to earn college hours, and a career pathways program allowing students to get a head start on their college credit or vocational training. The school houses a Communities in Schools branch to help prevent students from dropping out. The principal discussed changes in community needs. In his words, “Helping parents. You know that most of the time if there is a school problem, there is a family problem... There’s so much we can do to the kids although, to be honest, [to] a lot of the kids, this is their home. This is why they will never leave. They feel positive here; when they go home it might not be that great, and in a way that helps them because they like being here.”

The counselor said that she wished the community was more involved and suggested that community members adopt students who are at risk of dropping out and act as mentors. She also called for an active parental role in the developmental and educational processes of children.

According to the head counselor, the counseling and guidance department organizes a parents’ night for incoming eighth grade students to provide information and discuss expectations, requirements, and curriculum. Counselors also work with the four feeder elementary schools and with the area’s private schools, and meet with the students at their respective campuses. During freshman orientation, the eighth graders tour the high school and receive information. The orientation is handled primarily by students, with the support of counselors. In this way, students feel

more at ease and meet peers in what will be their new school. For the graduating class, the school provides transportation for trips to major Texas universities and the counseling and guidance department offers a financial aid workshop for parents. The principal added that representatives from colleges come on a weekly basis to inform students about their programs, and students have access to the Guidance Resource Center and a computer-based program that allows them to get college information and send applications electronically. The counselor described the district role in supporting developmental transitions: "The counselors come together in a districtwide meeting and . . . what they're doing at the elementary and junior high level is carried on to the secondary level. We just started doing this, I'd say about 92-93, where a lot of the issues are being addressed at the elementary level. Students are starting on career pathways as early as the age of grade level three. So it's carrying on with them so that when we get them we can focus in on helping them be successful out there. We're trying to reach a lot of the students." The counselor identified strategic planning as another form of support that the department obtains from the district.

The head counselor indicated no dissatisfaction with teacher and administrative support to the program. However, she expressed a need to collaborate more with teachers; time with students is a source of conflict between counselors and teachers. The counselor and principal described how teachers are involved through student assistance programs and collaboration with department staff in tutoring migrant students or running programs targeting ninth graders. The counselor also mentioned that teachers refer students to counselors and to their different programs, take part in orientation, and sit in on some counseling sessions. Although administrators assist with test coordination, counselors proctor the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. The principal added that administrators work with counselors on student referrals for services under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and that the dean of instruction and assistant principal are in charge of scheduling, working closely with the counselors. All staff are involved in discipline because the principal believes that student needs today require a different attitude. He believes that it is better to use discipline referrals to enhance students' capacity to be more responsible. In his words, "Our discipline here is pretty much valued space, rather than just discipline, you know, [the] punitive type."

## Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services

### Areas Prompting Need for Change

The need to better address students' personal development and to enhance the preventive aspects of the program was corroborated by both student and adult focus group participants. The university outreach representative felt that there was a need to reevaluate the current mission statement and clarify the responsibilities and aims of the program with greater emphasis on developmental and preventive aspects. Participants echoed her characterization of the program organization as pulling counselors in too many directions.

When discussing ways in which the program could be more helpful to students, the teachers, parent, and community representatives in the adult focus group voiced that the program focus is mostly on high performing students and students at risk of dropping out of school, and they concurred that *all* students need help. They, too, attributed the counselors' inability to reach all students to large case loads, depth and diversity of problems, and the changing home environment of students. The head counselor said that the students who need additional help the most are those with disabilities and they require much time: "One case can take a whole week, and so it ties us up a great deal, and I know that they need a lot more."

Students suggested enhancing communication with regard to the role of the counselor. They also suggested that the program increase student's awareness of the resources available. Students said that counselors are perceived as academic advisors or associated with scheduling and that the majority of students do not know that they are available to assist them with emotional and personal concerns. Students said that because counselors are perceived as academic advisors, students for whom college is not a priority "do not care at all" or are "annoyed" by counselors. They conveyed a sense of frustration as they explained how they must be called out of class to see counselors. To address the issues above, several students suggested having assemblies in which counselors could introduce themselves, explain services (academic, career, personal), and invite students to come into the office on a regular basis.

## Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs

In general, adult focus group participants agreed that the counseling and guidance program focuses on academic and career elements and little attention is paid to personal and developmental aspects of students' needs. The diagnostician present in the discussion said that she would like to see more balance. The counselor explained that the TEA Comprehensive

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*"It's very hard to get . . . students to do any of the developmental activities that need to be done because we just don't have access to the students."*

—Counselor

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Model's allocation of counselors' time for guidance curriculum at the high school level is not easily attainable. She added that high school teachers resist allowing counselors to take class time away from academics because preparing for the TAAS and teaching all the essential elements are priority. The counselor also reflected on the fact that students' social needs have increased and emphasized that what used to be a difficult transition is now more conflict-ridden. She emphasized that high school is one of the most difficult developmental periods for students and expressed a sense of frustration when she said, "I understand where they're [teachers] coming from and it's very hard to get a hold of these students to do any of the developmental activities that need to be done, because we just don't have access to the students." Students corroborated that the main emphasis of the program is on their academic needs. One student expressed how personal needs are related to academic ones: "And another thing is that in this area [there are] a lot of students...whose parent didn't go to college. They are the first ones in their family to go to college. I think it is important for the counselors to be there for them every step of the way because they don't really have someone to turn to and say what do I do now? What do I need to do in order to get in? How can I get financial aid? And even those that don't want to go to college, I'm sure that there are programs that they can get involved in."

The principal's view was that all three aspects—academic, personal, and career needs—were empha-

sized, but that "if I had my choice...put more emphasis on... the personal, then the other things will just fall into light." The parent present in the discussion felt that the counselors' main objective should be to address academic needs.

To ensure a holistic approach to student needs, focus group participants suggested that additional counselors be employed to deal separately with each of the three different aspects of students' needs under discussion. When the principal discussed the type of students served by the program, he mentioned that counselors focus their energies with students at both ends of the achievement spectrum. Although he feels that all students should be served, he felt that, realistically, they could not meet all the needs of all students. The university outreach and the CIS representatives echoed the principal's concerns regarding not reaching the "student in the middle." When the head counselor discussed how much time counselors spend on the students who are at risk of dropping out of school, she talked about CIS and the student assistance program. Some students are sent to an alternative school; others who have fallen short of credits and want to get ahead apply to the self-paced alternative program. In addition to CIS, the counselors felt that there is a need for a counselor devoted to students identified as at risk of dropping out because of their unique needs.

## Emphasis in Allocating Services According to the Comprehensive Model Components

When comparing the program's allocation of counselors' time to that of the TEA Comprehensive Model, the counselor reiterated that the program most emphasizes individual planning and least emphasizes guidance curriculum. The counselors' perceived percentages of counseling time allocation shown in Table 13.2 are similar to those reported in the findings of a 1992-93 study of the district counseling and guidance program. The program also was tracked for one six-week grading period in 1993-94 and showed even less time devoted to guidance curriculum and more to individual planning. The head counselor explained that even though their goal is to adhere to the comprehensive model allocations, the allocation for guidance curriculum is hard to attain at the high school level. In high school, more time is needed for individual planning because students are being prepared for life after graduation.

Table 13.2 shows that counselors, teachers, and the parent, after discussing the comprehensive model,

reached some consensus regarding enhancement of the program's capacity to conduct guidance curriculum activities. They described the ideal program as devoting 25 to 30 percent of the counselors' time to guidance curriculum. With the exception of the head counselor, percentages in Table 13.2 reflect a general perception that counselors' time allocation to responsive services could be reduced. Also counselors, the assistant principal, and the parent would ideally eliminate non-guidance tasks.

### Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach

The head counselor recognized that students have more than academic needs, and the focus on students' academic performance does not afford a comprehensive approach to students' development. Other counselors' comments, from the adult focus group, reflected a concern for students' home environments. They stated having to teach respect and responsibility to students. The head counselor wished she could spend time on character education.

The head counselor described a number of campus intervention and prevention efforts such as a conflict resolution group that addresses campus violence; the career pathways program, which prepares students for the work force, and career exploration program, implemented districtwide to address issues starting in third grade; and the campus GED program. She also talked about preventing suicide. "When we see problems, we do the referral to the core team. Our teachers understand that if they see a problem in a student they need to refer to the core team, and stu-

dents are being handled in that way." The principal felt that the counseling and guidance program has evolved from a traditional program into a comprehensive program and, at the same time, expressed a desire to move toward a preventive orientation. The counselors, staff, parent, and community representative who participated in the focus group agreed that counselors only have time to do intervention-oriented work, and that preventive activities are secondary. The head counselor said that the district adheres to the TEA Comprehensive Model but that they are still working through problems. There is also a district-level evaluation patterned after the TEMPSC that has provided valuable information about how programs are being implemented, and problems others encounter within the district.

Students evaluated the program from different perspectives, according to their level of involvement. The students who participated in programs found their work very rewarding. Two students expressed satisfaction about the work they do with counselors as peers helping elementary school students with academic and personal problems.

Table 13.3 on Page 94 reflects that in general, students view favorably the services counselors provide.

### Factors Relevant to the Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model

The students recognized the heavy work load counselors have and suggested that more support for counselors be allocated. Students were also concerned with school violence and disciplinary problems. They

Table 13.2 Perceived Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #13										
Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Counselor*	10%	30%	23%	27%	35%	27%	17%	17%	15%	0%
Asst. Principal	10%	30%	50%	30%	30%	30%	10%	10%	0%	0%
School Staff*	14%	28%	38%	29%	29%	26%	15%	15%	7%	5%
Parents*	20%	25%	40%	10%	20%	45%	15%	20%	5%	0%
Community Representative	10%	10%	40%	10%	20%	60%	25%	15%	5%	5%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff and parent perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

suggested that those who are having these types of problems, often stemming from personal conflict at home, should be referred to the counselor. One student suggested that if a counselor helped these students, that the effort "could stop a lot of problems in the school."

When the principal was asked to identify what interferes the most with counselors' time, he talked about paperwork in reference to scheduling and counselors having to count transcripts manually. He felt that automation of the scheduling system would be key to solving this problem. When the head counselor discussed how to enhance the program's prevention capacity, she said that she would like additional counselors to fulfill this aspect. She agreed with the notion that the problem does not stem from a lack of materials or a lack of curriculum guides. She said, "The problem is time and accessibility to the classroom." When identifying other things that interfere with their capacity to provide preventive support, they included the changing needs of the student population and the rising numbers of those identified as at risk; having to deal with testing, paperwork, and crisis

situations on a daily basis also take away from the preventive aspects of the program.

In terms of what the community contributes to help students who are at risk, the counselor finds that CIS is not enough and, if youth services were better coordinated at the local level, counselors could be more effective in preventing academic failure. A teacher in the focus group suggested that the school and community establish a communication channel where they can come to a consensus on a definition of needs. The principal suggested the regional Education Service Center (ESC) as the potential mediator between the community and the counseling and guidance staff, not only to host conferences to educate members as to what counselors do, but also to support counselors' professional staff development. In his words, "They [ESC staff] should do a lot more. They just don't do enough at least in this area....compared to [another region where they are doing] a lot more staff development... Instead, our counselors have to go to [other major cities in the state]...I send them all over the place [out of state]."

**Table 13.3**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance at Campus #13**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor helps me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	8	—	3
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	6	—	5
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	8	—	3
D. understand the good things about my homework.	1	5	5
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	7	—	4
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	10	—	1
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	8	1	2
2. I am excited about the work we are doing in the guidance program	6	—	5
3. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.	10	1	—
4. I see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	—	11	—
5. The counselor is fun to be around.	10	—	1

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

## Policy Concerns

### Characteristics and Indicators of Success

The head counselor described a successful counseling and guidance program as a collaborative effort among staff, agencies, and community resources that makes these support services accessible to students in a way that meets the needs of every student. She added that to have such a program a student-to-counselor ratio of 350 to 1 is desirable, with a variety of different counselors (academic, specialty, personal, vocational, etc.). In turn, the principal defined a successful program as student-centered. He added that this is consistent with the district's guidance plan that stresses responsiveness to students' needs. The principal expressed pride when stating that the school's department is an example of a successful program, largely because of its caring staff. He also mentioned that this is the most comprehensive guidance program in the district and affirmed that he is committed to seeing that elements of this school's program are implemented districtwide. The teachers, parent, and community representative in the adult focus group conveyed that a successful counseling and guidance program should have clerical resources that allow counselors time to provide direct student support services. According to the assistant principal, in a successful program, organization of a counselor's time allows him or her to concentrate on prevention efforts.

The principal said that the effectiveness of the counseling and guidance program is demonstrated by the fact that the school has the lowest dropout rate in the district (decreased from almost 18 percent to less than 4 percent). In the principal's words, "When I first came here we had a 17.9% drop-out rate. Last year it was 3.5%. This year I think we're going to go below that. We're not content with that. We want to get it down to two or one, but [success]...a lot of it has to do with the attitude of helping students to be placed in situations where they're successful, and reaching out and helping them be successful by guiding and counseling them. There's a great impact that the counselors have made. The...program is fantastic!"

The principal and the head counselor discussed indicators to measure the program's success. They indicated that through annual evaluations they have been able to monitor program effectiveness. They attributed reduction in the dropout rate, as well as these other benefits, directly to the program:

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*"A lot of it [success] has to do with the attitude of helping students to be placed in situations where they're successful . . . There's a great impact that the counselors have made."*

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—Principal

increases in graduation rates, scholarships obtained by students, students mastering TAAS, enrollment in vocational courses, students taking ACT and SAT examinations, students taking Advanced Placement examinations, students enrolled in joint community college and university programs and obtaining credits, and increased school attendance rates.

### Messages for Policy Makers

The following comments were identified as messages to policy makers:

- If counselors had a clearly defined status, their role would not be determined by district resources. District involvement is very important for implementing a successful counselor identity.
- Better clerical support would help ensure that counselors' time is not spent on extraneous tasks.
- The proportion of counselors in the current student-counselor ratio should be increased so that *all* students can be served.
- The principal felt that the best thing policy makers could do for counseling and guidance is to "stay out of the way." Rules and regulations tend to eclipse counselors' most important traits of empathy and caring.
- The Education Service Center (ESC) has not been very active with respect to guidance and counseling.

### Potential Areas for Policy Attention

Although this high school follows the TEA Comprehensive Model and uses the TEMPSC in evaluating their professional counselors, areas for policy attention revolved around further steps that could be taken to adhere to the model. The counselor and principal suggested that the district build a data base that allows counselors access to registration information because

the department spends “endless hours on pre-registration.” The counselor also suggested hiring more clerical support personnel. To enhance the preventive capacity of counseling and guidance programs, the counselor called for teacher support to implement a guidance curriculum.

Integration of community services would enhance the comprehensive nature of the counseling and guidance program by reducing time currently allocated to coordination and referrals. Enhancement of the professional counselor identity through increased communication with the community was also called for. The counselors, staff, parent, and community representative concurred with the counselor and principal that the community is not in touch with the wide range of responsibilities counselors have and that having this information would actually change the community’s expectations of school counselors to

solve all problems. The principal is reluctant to involve community members in work done by counselors because of the confidential nature of their work but thought this was an area in which the ESC could assist. The head counselor suggested continuing to explore ways in which they can increase community involvement and called for more parental involvement in order for the counseling program to become a support system for students’ success.

Enhancing communication about what counselors do was important to students as well. Students suggested assemblies where all students would receive information about the program and help them realize that counselors can do more than their class schedules. They also requested that the program meet their need for more than just academic and career counseling. They said that the program was not dealing with their personal needs.

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## High School: Campus 15

### Background

#### Campus Characteristics

This campus is located in a non-metropolitan, stable-growth district with lower than average district wealth. It has 659 students enrolled in Grades 9-12. Under the 1995 accountability system, academic performance at the campus was rated *Low Performing*. Table 15.1 summarizes characteristics of students, teachers, and counselors.

#### Interview Sources

Interviews were conducted with the principal, one of the counselors, an adult focus group, and a student focus group. The adult focus group included a counselor, the principal, five parents, three teachers, and the school librarian. The student focus group consisted of two sophomores, two juniors, and six seniors.

### Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

#### Development and History on Campus

According to the counselor interviewed, she and the other full-time counselor were hired when the school’s

previous counselors retired. The counseling and guidance mission and philosophy was developed more than three years ago by all of the counselors in the district.

#### Goals and Expectations

The campus’ written philosophy states that “Guidance is the process of assisting an individual to develop those skills which will enable him to direct his own life, make his own decisions [and is a] continuous process which permeates the entire school situation...[It] is based on the idea that each individual child has worth and dignity...[and] that each child is an individual and develops mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally, and spiritually at his own rate. This development is a continuous process which can be aided and directed, but not hurried.”

In the interview the counselor stated: “Our philosophy is to try to meet the needs of all of our students, to try to help them to make good decisions about their lives, to help them academically to perform well in school, to prepare them for the future—whether it be college, some kind of career, some kind of productive work—and to make them feel good about themselves.” According to the counselor, the main goal is to help develop a well-rounded, productive, and content

person. The principal agreed that the mission of counseling and guidance is to provide counseling and direction to students to prepare them for whatever they choose to do after high school.

The teachers added that the counselors are there to help when needed and that the counselors care about the students and the community. An example of counselor dedication to the students, given by the school librarian, was that despite all the paperwork the counselors have to contend with, they are always willing to follow up on things like scholarship possibilities for the students. Parents participating in the adult focus group confirmed that the counselors were there as listeners to offer guidance about school and the future, with the students' best interests at heart.

According to the counselor, the community and parents expect counselors to provide a quick fix: "When they are going to college, they expect for me to sit down and fill out their application, and to fill out their scholarship applications, and to spoon feed them. This is what parents think that we should do... [and] I think they [parents] expect us to be a moderator between teacher and student." The school librarian concurred with the counselor, stating that the community expectation for counselors is: "They can solve our problems." Furthermore, the librarian said, "I think that more people would think of it [counseling and guidance] more in terms of emotional involvement or emotional solutions rather than academic." One teacher added that the community wants "a counseling system that sees a finished product....kids that have a good balance between all [of] these things [academic, career, and personal development]."

## Campus Implementation

The guidance and counseling program mission is implemented in a variety of ways. The counselor stated that there are two full-time counselors who divide the students by grade level—one works with the eleventh and twelfth graders, and the other is responsible for the ninth and tenth grade students. Teachers indicated that they are responsible for referring some students to the counseling and guidance program. One teacher commented that the counselors help students who qualify for special education services by assisting teachers with forms that need to be completed, by informing teachers of what needs to be done to get students tested, and by making sure the students are tested.

According to the counselor, counselors go into the classrooms as often as they can to present material on a wide variety of issues such as scheduling, classes required for graduation, career and college preparation, peer pressure, and self-concept. However, the majority of guidance curriculum is taught by the teachers.

The counselor reported that the school has two support groups for students. One group is for pregnant teenagers and teen mothers, and the other is a support group led by student peer counselors. The peer counselor support group targets students who are considered to be at risk of school failure or of dropping out and who have been in trouble. This support group meets weekly during lunch. One student said that being a peer counselor is voluntary and that the students are there to encourage each other about school. Another student in the focus group stated that there is also a group geared toward having high school

**Table 15.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #15**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	5%	2%	Number of Counselor Positions	2
Hispanic	51%	9%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	None
White	43%	88%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	330:1
Other Minority	1%	0%	Number of Teachers	45
Economically Disadvantaged	35%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	11 Years
Limited English Proficient	1%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.

Note: Ethnicity percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

students serve as positive role models for fourth and fifth graders. According to student focus group members, high school students participating in this group are assigned to fourth or fifth grade classes, and they interact weekly with the younger students.

In addition to the peer counseling groups, the counselor mentioned that she and the other counselor go to the middle schools to talk to eighth graders about high school class requirements, and get them thinking about what classes they may be interested in. Students are given tours of the high school by high school student council members. Also, counselors have an orientation with parents of middle school students. The principal added that at this orientation he discussed the school handbook, expectations, and policies. In an effort to increase parental involvement, the counselor stated that they present orientation information about the school requirements on two nights to accommodate more parents.

According to the counselor, teachers are involved in counseling students about classes they should take and about academic problems. The principal noted that the students talk to teachers not only about classes but about personal issues as well. The counselor spoke of getting teachers involved when there are crises, such as students being placed in the school temporarily while problems in their homes are worked out or when permanent placement is found for students in a foster care situation. During this sort of crisis, the counselor reported relying on teachers to help.

Community involvement referenced by the counselor includes a "shadowing program," which is an opportunity for seniors to learn about a profession by working with local professionals, and a program where community representatives talk to students about their occupations. The counselor also organizes a career day each fall with 30 or more college, vocational, and military representatives from around the state who come to the school and distribute information to students and parents. The principal commented that this career day is advertised to encourage parent involvement, and the counselor remarked that they attempt to schedule it at a time that will be convenient for more parents to become involved. In addition, the local armed services administers the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) free of charge to help students identify potential vocational strengths.

According to the counselor, high school to post-high school transition is addressed through all four years of

high school. Starting in the ninth grade, counselors discuss post-secondary education options and careers and conduct interviews with students, not only about career paths the students may pursue but also what life will be like outside of high school. The counselor stated: "We talk about college, we talk about careers, we talk about other things beside college...I just try to stress [that] they can do whatever they want to do if they want to work for it, but college is not for everyone."

Regarding resources available to implement the counseling and guidance program, the principal felt the budget is sufficient to meet objectives of the program. The counselor reported that she and the other counselor serve approximately 630 students. According to the counselor and principal, the counseling and guidance program has a full-time secretary who is responsible for filing and other clerical duties. The counselor noted that in previous years the counseling and guidance program had had parent volunteers and student aides; however, this year they had no additional office help other than the secretary.

Other human resources reported by the counselor include individuals funded through a federal program in a neighboring city. The counselor stressed that these individuals were valuable because they visit with parents to help explain and fill out college financial aid forms and come to the school about twice a month to visit with the students. In addition, the counselor acknowledged that the Education Service Center has provided materials and staff to help students who are having difficulties.

Moreover, the counselor mentioned that counselors have computers and typewriters to use. For instance, student information and class scheduling is computerized and stored on one of the computers. Students also have access to the computers and use a program that can generate information about different colleges or career interests and can create form letters for college applications. The counselor stated that they have a lot of audiovisual materials about issues such as study skills, drug abuse, and teen pregnancy. She added that these videos are presented to students in classes such as English, government, economics, or world history.

## Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services

### Areas Prompting Need for Change

The counselor explained that due to lack of time some student needs go unmet; however, if somebody comes in with a crisis situation, the counselors drop everything to find a remedy. She indicated that problems go unnoticed a lot of the time if the teachers do not call their attention to them. In the past, students dropped out before the counselors had a chance to discuss the decision, but this year the counselor has worked to have every student who is considering dropping out of school come in and talk about the situation. In addition, the counselor viewed college-bound seniors as needing more attention because so much is involved in completing college applications and financial aid paperwork.

In the principal's opinion, needs of the top 50 percent of the students academically are, for the most part, being met. However, when it comes to meeting the needs of the lower 50 percent, who the principal stated are the ones dropping out of school and the ones experiencing problems at home, the counseling and guidance program is falling short. In contrast, one adult focus group member viewed the "middle" students—"not those who accelerate, and not those who are always in trouble, but all of those people that are right in the middle"—as the students least served by the program.

Adult focus group participants also mentioned that the student-to-counselor ratio is problematic because there are not enough counselors to go around. One participant explained: "We are reacting rather than being proactive. You don't have time to plan programs because you are busy trying to get done what needs to get done. If there were more counselors, or more people to spread some of this work, then there might be time to plan programs that might be proactive." One teacher said that if the teachers bring the students' problems to the counselors' attention, the problems are dealt with sufficiently. However, without the teachers being the "first step," some problems go unresolved. Although one teacher argued that the ratio problem is mediated by the counselors having an "open door" policy, another teacher pointed out that sometimes students need to talk to counselors before things erode into problems. She also remarked that students are not comfortable going to the counselor

because they do not know what counseling entails, and this lack of exposure causes students to miss out on the counselors' expertise.

Another group of students that adult focus group members mentioned as not receiving enough attention from the counseling and guidance program is pregnant teens. One group member felt teenage pregnancy is a societal problem that probably cannot be resolved by just one group of people such as counselors or school personnel. Student focus group members suggested that more attention be given to students who have problems with drugs and to students who are considering dropping out.

Regarding student needs, the counselor pointed out that her time would be better spent if she did not have to be responsible for scheduling at the beginning of the school year. Although the school has a registrar who takes care of mailing out transcripts, the counselor is responsible for assigning schedules. She suggested, that although the campus student-to-counselor ratio is adequate, hiring a "testing counselor" to be in charge of the testing programs would allow her and the other counselor to concentrate on counseling. The principal agreed that counselors are asked to perform duties that are not part of their jobs, and that additional staff would help solve this problem.

Helping students become aware of what counselors can do for them and building rapport are other areas the counselor and a teacher suggested as needing to be addressed. The counselor acknowledged that "all students are not going to feel comfortable talking to us. Number one, they may have had a bad experience with a counselor... or someone has told them that if they go see the counselor that they are crazy."

Like the students interviewed, adult focus group participants felt that the community and parents would do well to learn more about the counselor's role. Parents indicated that the focus group experience had been a real eye-opener for them. One parent replied: "When we [parents] were kids...we thought: 'Well, going to a counselor, man, you are in trouble.'...It is all [a] different look of life [now] I guess, because a counselor is ...supposed to be your friend. To me that is the way I look at it. She [the counselor] has really been a great help to me and my boys this past year, trying to get my boys ready for college."

## Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs

The majority of participants in the adult focus group and most of the students interviewed agreed that the school's counseling and guidance program has a heavy emphasis on academics. The counselor stated that serving students' academic needs is emphasized most because this has to be done and, because of counselor time limitations, personal needs are often neglected. The counselor, principal, and some of the teachers concurred out that the deficiency in time spent on personal issues results from the many time consuming tasks counselors have to complete.

Several teachers indicated that it is difficult to separate students' academic and career needs. One teacher stated that serving academic and career needs should be the main objectives, but if personal needs are identified, teachers can try to refer these students to the counselors. Similarly, one parent stated that

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*“She [the counselor] has really been a great help to me and my boys this past year, trying to get my boys ready for college.”*

—Parent

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“mainly the parents should be the first one that is there [for personal issues].”

Students were split on which counseling and guidance area they believe is least emphasized. A few students felt that there is equal time spent on all three areas. Some male students reported that career needs are stressed the least, while others, predominately female, mentioned least emphasis on personal development. One female student commented that emphasis on students' personal growth has changed for the better but is still the least emphasized. One male student's perception was that personal development receives the least focus but that he was also very close-minded about opening up to counselors.

Some adult focus group participants remarked that personal development should be stressed more often. One teacher commented: “I wish we stressed personal more because I know that there are a lot of kids here that never would admit they have a problem, but if they have somebody come by and say ‘can I help you,

is there something you really need?’ Do you need time to talk?”—if they have somebody confront them with that, then they would open up possibly. Whereas if they never have anybody ask, they are just going to keep stuffing it down.”

## Emphasis in Allocating Services According to Comprehensive Model Components

The counselor, principal, staff, and parents were asked to estimate the percentage of time the guidance and counseling program allocates to each of the four Texas Education Agency (TEA) Comprehensive Model components. Table 15.2 contains participants' perceptions of counseling time allocations at this campus.

For the most part, participants in the adult focus group reported that in an ideal situation they would shift some of the current time allocated to individual planning and responsive services to areas such as the guidance curriculum. The counselor stated that in the current program counselors do not teach the guidance curriculum but that the counselors' role is to support those who do—the teachers. She further commented that she and the other counselor could do more regarding the guidance curriculum if time was available.

## Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach

Adult focus group members saw the counseling and guidance program as being more reactive than proactive. One participant commented that she knows there are programs such as drug prevention that are available, but they are not routine. The school librarian remarked: “Simply because of the time factor, there is not a great deal of time to do [or be] proactive because... [that requires] an awful lot of searching and analyzing and reading and talking and trying to figure out what is the best program for your school...There is not enough time to plan preventive programs because we are busy intervening.”

The counselor saw the balance between intervention and prevention as 60-70 percent of time on intervention activities with the remainder of time devoted to prevention. She stated that prevention activities at the school include using videos and discussing issues such as peer pressure, study skills, and self-concept in the classroom. Further, she commented: “I think a lot of time when there is conflict between students, we try to prevent the big fight, but we are unsuccessful, so then

we have to intervene after it happens.” After discussion in the focus group, the principal agreed with the counselor and stated that the balance between intervention and prevention was 75 percent intervention and 25 percent prevention activities.

### Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model

From the counselor’s perspective, the community could play a more active part in the school counseling and guidance program by providing moral support, referring students for counseling, and supporting the school as a whole. Although she indicated that the counselors and community have a good relationship, the school is located in such a small community that the only avenues for community involvement or support are through the churches and civic organizations. Otherwise, she noted, “Our society has a lot of apathy right now... I think that they think ‘well, if my child is not involved, well then [don’t bother]’... I think that they just don’t realize what is going on, and I am not sure that they really even want to know.”

Support from parents was another area the counselor cited as needing improvement. Last school year they tried to get parents and students involved in an academic booster club, similar to the notion of athletic and band booster clubs, but for reasons unknown, few parents turned out to support this club. The school is working on a four-year plan, starting with the eighth graders and their parents, to try to get parents more involved. According to the counselor, this plan includes having parents sign their child’s schedule and/or failing report card and having teachers call parents twice per six-week period to talk about the

child, and hopefully to inform parents about something positive.

Another change suggested by focus group participants that would help the counseling and guidance program is to get more clerical help, which would decrease counselors’ paperwork and scheduling duties. One participant spoke of the community and parents becoming more involved by perhaps volunteering to do these duties. Adult focus group members pointed out that testing responsibilities, including getting test booklets together and distributed, also cut into the counselor’s limited time.

When students were asked what changes and improvements could be made to the guidance and counseling program, one student suggested concentrating more on the younger students because he felt guidance counselors had a lot more influence on younger children. He felt that if counselors, particularly those who work with younger kids, strive to see the potential in students rather than the negative, this could improve the program. Two students stated that improvements could be made if counselors work more with parents of students who want help, as well as with parents of students who have problems but do not seek help.

Other student suggestions included making students more aware of what counselors do and having more programs, similar to the peer program, that help students learn how to open up and have more confidence in talking to adults such as teachers and counselors. Table 15.3 on Page 102 summarizes further opinions from student focus group members about what counselors do for them.

**Table 15.2**  
**Perceived Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #15**

Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Counselor	15%	20%	40%	30%	35%	30%	10%	20%	0%	0%
Principal	15%	25%	40%	30%	35%	30%	10%	15%	0%	0%
School Staff*	16%	29%	29%	29%	40%	26%	15%	16%	0%	0%
Parents*	21%	20%	33%	31%	27%	29%	19%	18%	0%	2%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff and parent perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

## Policy Concerns

### Characteristics and Indicators of Success

The counselor stated that ideally a successful program has students with no problems and who are well adjusted. Students in successful programs are in the appropriate classes and are passing these classes.

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*“Anytime we have a student that can’t play football because he is not passing, and he is . . . terribly upset . . . that is where we come in.”*

—Counselor

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Indicators of success are a decrease in the number of students at risk of dropping out, a lower dropout rate, and more students either gainfully employed or going on to higher education. Success is also realized by

helping students with problems learn to cope and make better decisions. According to the principal, a successful counseling and guidance program is one in which students feel comfortable going to counselors for whatever reason and one in which students feel confident they will be directed toward careers or colleges that best suit their abilities.

One parent reported that a successful program has students who are excelling in academics and going in directions they need to be going. Another adult focus group participant said a successful program should deal more often with students’ personal development; by dealing with the students emotionally, other areas become less problematic. Success, according to another focus group member, is meeting the needs of the student population, whatever that population is at any particular school.

Participants noted that if there are enough counselors to get to know the students so that students feel comfortable talking to counselors, the program will be

**Table 15.3**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance at Campus #15**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor helps me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	9	—	1
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	8	—	2
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	10	—	—
D. understand the good things about my homework.	6	2	2
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	9	—	1
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	10	—	—
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	10	—	—
2. I am excited about the work we are doing in the guidance program	5	—	5
3. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.	9	1	—
4. I see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	10	—	—
5. The counselor is fun to be around.	10	—	—

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

successful. The counselor remarked that communication and rapport between students and counselor are signs of a successful program. One teacher agreed that counselor visibility, being out and being visible among the student body, is important in a successful program.

### Messages for Policy Makers

The principal suggested that policy makers should work to provide more counselors and more clerical assistance to remove some of the paperwork from existing counselors' workloads. In contrast, the counselor stated that policy makers can support the counseling and guidance program by giving counselors a pay raise.

The counselor interviewed also suggested that policy makers should be aware that policies regarding Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) administra-

tion and the "no pass, no play" rules have an impact on the counseling and guidance program because these not only affect students academically but also emotionally. Having to tell a senior that he or she is not going to graduate because of a low score on TAAS is probably the hardest part of her job. She also commented: "Anytime we have a student that can't play football because he is not passing, and he is...terribly upset...that is where we come in."

### Potential Areas for Policy Attention

Potential areas for policy attention, as mentioned by those interviewed at this campus, included increasing awareness of the counselor's role and responsibilities and providing adequate staff and/or volunteer support to minimize counselor time on clerical and testing duties. Another area for attention was the need to increase the level of parent and community involvement.

## High School: Campus 17

### Background

#### Campus Characteristics

This campus is located in the largest district in a county with a population around 100,000. The district has a lower than average district wealth and serves 1,591 students in Grades 9-12. Under the 1995 accountability system, academic performance at the campus was rated *Low Performing*. Table 17.1

summarizes student, teacher, and staffing characteristics at this campus.

#### Interview Sources

Interviews with the principal, counselor, adult focus group, and student focus group were conducted. The adult focus group included the counselor, principal, and three teachers. The student focus group consisted of two freshmen, two sophomores, three juniors, and three seniors.

**Table 17.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #17**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	21%	6%	Number of Counselor Positions	5
Hispanic	30%	3%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	None
White	35%	91%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	318:1
Other Minority	14%	0%	Number of Teachers	102
Economically Disadvantaged	40%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	13 Years
Limited English Proficient	8%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.

## **Campus Counseling and Guidance Program**

### **Development and History on Campus**

The counselor explained that the school's counseling and guidance program was developed at the district level following the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Comprehensive Model. It was developed by a committee composed of counselors, parents, and administrators, with some student involvement.

### **Goals and Expectations**

The counselor reported that the school's counseling and guidance mission was put in place as a support to the district's mission of creating learners out of the students they serve. She stated that staff try to do this on the individual campuses by "addressing the basic areas of guidance and curriculum, responsive services, [and] system support." Being new to the high school, the principal stated that he was unaware of what the previous mission encompassed. He felt the current philosophy was to meet the students' needs—academic, social, mental, and physical. He stressed the importance of reaching this goal regardless of the obstacles.

The counselor and teachers agreed that one goal was to lower the dropout rate and work on increasing student attendance. The counselor explained, "A lot of times the parents aren't aware that their student is not coming to school. We try to keep [in] contact with the parents as well as with the assistant principals to try and encourage those kids to come in [and to] find out why...they're not coming to school. And then we deal with those problems as best we can on [an] individual basis because there are a lot of reasons why students do not come to school."

The counselor said the role of guidance and counseling was to be very positive and very visible to the students. She added, "Letting them [students] know if they have a problem, or if they get themselves into a hole, in a crack, they need to come and see us quickly. That there's always a way out...We do a lot of individual counseling in that area."

According to the principal, "This community expects to send their child to this school and for us to take care of their needs—emotionally, physically, academically—and that includes the counselors.... This com-

munity has some traditional values... These are blue collar people. They still believe that education is important. They still believe that what we do is important. They have a trust in us that we're going to do what's right.... They expect us to be all things to all people, and sometimes we don't want to accept all of those roles. We have to show up at the hospital when the little girl has the baby. We have to go to her house. We had a little girl commit suicide earlier this year. Two of our counselors were just a tremendous resource to the family. They went over there. It wasn't—'Let's shake their hand. I'm sorry it's happening to them. Bye.' They went over and were a resource for the community and [for] what happened.... That's what it has to be. This school has to be an extension of the community—not the community an extension of us."

### **Campus Implementation**

According to the counselor and teachers in the adult focus group, program implementation at the school is geared toward correct placement: "If we don't have the student placed correctly, they're not going to be very successful, and we know that students that are not successful are those that are more prime to give up and drop out." Counselors, she explained, work hard to place students with teachers best suited to their personalities, try to encourage students through daily and weekly contact, and as mentioned previously, to be very positive and visible to students. The counselor saw individual counseling directed at helping students with problems.

The counselor explained that implementation now occurs more often on an individual basis, whereas in the past more group and classroom activities were conducted. She reported that classroom activities are usually more career and college oriented. The counselor felt that individual counseling, though often reactive, was beneficial to all recipients: "I think that everyone that we see is helped. I think we do an excellent job... There has been a lot of times that we have heard about problems, dropped everything, gone and sought it out, ...solved it [and] gone on."

Counselors help with the transition of middle school students to high school by meeting with them and discussing schedules, giving tours of the campus, and making a presentation to parents. The principal stated that in the future other departments such as athletics, band, and vocational education will be expected to

make presentations to middle school students in an effort to increase personal contacts with the new students. Students in transition from high school to college and/or careers can attend a college/career event sponsored by the community center and area colleges. The principal added that some college representatives come to the campus to make presentations.

The counselor reported that the school does have a written guidance curriculum that was developed at the district level. However, she stressed that the guidance curriculum has not been used at this campus in two years because of time constraints resulting from paperwork and the deletion of one counselor position. The guidance curriculum materials were designed to be used in groups and to address issues such as self-esteem, responsible behavior, decision making, goal setting, interpersonal effectiveness, and communication skills. The materials also were designed to ensure that the counselors build upon the guidance curriculum materials used with elementary and middle school students.

One teacher stated, "I think counselors have been instrumental in coming up with programs and focusing on the quick strength [of students], looking at the weaknesses, getting them [students] in the proper areas that they need to be in and ...[in] the proper courses." Furthermore, this teacher felt that the counselors helped students by "encouraging them in the nature of ACTs [American College Tests], SATs [Scholastic Assessment Tests], [and] future-oriented programs." Counseling and guidance, according to this participant, also provides career information to students through a center with computers and software programs.

According to the principal, counselor, teachers and students, guidance and counseling is responsible for course scheduling and academic advising. One teacher commented that the counselors do a good job of informing students about the demands of the honors classes and appropriately placing students. She added, "I think they [counselors] have been supportive of trying to find right places... knowing that the student is capable of doing the grade requirements...and encouraging them to stay in there and tough it out."

Student focus group members reported that the counselors are friendly and caring. Some of these students stated that they only had contact with the

counselor for schedule changes, while others worked with the counselors on teacher-student conflict, college applications, and personal problems, like coping with peer suicide.

Several of the students in the group were involved in a student mentor group. In this group, students have the opportunity to work with someone from the community who is in a career the student is interested in learning more about. The counselor also spoke of a mentor group in which junior female students have an opportunity to learn about a career. This mentoring program is sponsored throughout the community, with these females assigned to women in professions of interest to them. Another group mentioned by the student focus group members was a peer assistance and leadership group. Students involved in this group "go around to middle schools and elementary [schools] talking to the kids...[to] teach the kids what high school has for you and what it's like to be older and to just get them experience in being an older person."

Student focus group participants also mentioned that the high school started a freshman program at the beginning of the year that gives current and upcoming freshmen an opportunity to have college expenses paid for by local businesses. Freshmen participating and meeting the requirements of this program during all four years of high school are eligible for these college scholarships.

This campus has five full-time counselors. Unlike previous years where caseloads were divided by grade level, the principal stated that counselors are now assigned students alphabetically. The purpose of this reorganization was to establish continuity of service and distribute the student population more evenly among the counselors.

Other resources available for implementing the guidance and counseling program include the recent acquisition of computers and printers for the counselors. According to the principal, these computers should help the counselors handle paperwork more efficiently and help in developing a better system of scheduling and data maintenance. Audiovisual equipment and other materials are also available to the counselors, including videotapes on issues such as developing self-esteem and improving test-taking skills.

Besides technological support, the principal stated there was a full-time registrar and a full-time clerk to assist the counselors. The counselor also said the school has a Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) coordinator who works with teachers on teaching approaches. Although the TAAS coordinator is a resource to the counseling and guidance program, she is not considered part of the counseling and guidance staff. Both principal and counselor felt that the budget for counseling and guidance was sufficient to meet current needs of their program.

## **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

### **Areas Prompting Need for Change**

All participants acknowledged guidance and counseling areas that needed more attention. Both the counselor and principal believed work was done on an individual basis with students. However, preventive activities, such as counseling with groups, were not done because of time limitations. The principal felt needs of Hispanic male students remained unmet by the school and the community. In addition, the counselor stated, "We have a hard time with that at our school. There are these groups of students that are just so quiet. We have a large Asian population here, and it's been difficult to break into that group because they tend to pull away and try to handle things on their own, and that's a hard group to work with that probably needs more attention."

Another focus group member expressed concern for African American and Hispanic females: "We have a high pregnancy rate, and it needs to be addressed." According to one teacher, a high number of students at this campus repeat grades because of excessive absences: "The ones with the absentee problems. That's a hard group to deal with... [and] I think probably needs more attention."

Focus group members also expressed concern about dropouts. Because the dropout rate is highest between the ninth and tenth grade, the principal has proposed making a ninth grade wing in the school to help these students better adjust to high school.

One teacher cited counselors' involvement with TAAS, and the pressure counselors felt to get students oriented to careers, as interfering with counseling time spent with students one-on-one. Another teacher concurred: "I think it's not because they don't have

the ability. I think it's time. I think unless the teachers come to them with the student that they are concerned about, they are so overwhelmed with kids and things to do that they cannot really work with them on personal levels with personal problems...I think they're hampered. It's not that they're [counselors] poor

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*"There is . . . a stigma of them [counselors] being . . . psychologists."*  
—Student

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performers." Though individual counseling has its positives, the counselor believes it also limits the number of students who can be served.

The principal commented that the quantity of clerical work and shortage of clerical staff were also areas that, if changed, would allow counselors more time with students. In addition, the principal felt that counseling and guidance staff needed to spend more time getting students better connected to the community by working on areas such as job training and mentoring.

Parental involvement and support were also areas that participants mentioned were in need of improvement. One student said, "Students that really ...don't have parents... pushing for them and giving them the self-esteem that they need [are the ones who need attention]. I believe that everything stems from the home and what your parents teach you is what you need in life. Some parents just kind of sit back and say, ... 'you do whatever and you just get it done.' And I think the counselors should... be more involved with the parents, and not only give self-esteem to the kids, but teach parents how to give that to the kids."

Students commented that a lack of knowledge about the counselor's role among students created a certain stigma: "There is... a stigma of them being... psychologist[s]... A counselor is supposed [to] be your psychologist, and you go there and lay down on the couch and spill... your guts but... That's not the way it is, and there is just no way of really telling anybody what it is unless they go and see him [the counselor]." Although the counselor's role was not an issue for all of the student focus group participants, several students commented that increasing counselor availability and visibility was important. One student said, "It's really getting out. A few of the people I know don't even know their counselor's name or if they really

have one, and so they just think the counselors are just some teacher's aide or somebody from the office just making sure that they're not getting in trouble."

Several students felt counselors should limit the number of staff meetings scheduled during school hours: "If they [counselors] have a meeting, [they should]... try to make it some other time than the school hours because sometimes that's the only time kids can actually go in and see them... They need to be there for...kids instead of just meetings." Another student focus group participant suggested disruptions caused by meetings or other duties could be avoided if counselors have back-up counselors who know and are responsible for the primary counselors' caseloads.

### Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs

Most adult focus group members agreed that meeting students' personal needs was the counseling and guidance area most emphasized at this campus. Participants explained that time spent by the counselors scheduling classes for students created a lot of one-on-one time with the students.

Student focus group members viewed career decision making and academic growth as the counseling and guidance areas most emphasized at this campus. Least emphasized, according to students, is personal development. One student explained, "Personal development... pretty much starts in your middle school years because that's where you really [are] starting to develop personal skills...not necessarily your personality, but how you're going to act...the way you act. Because you become more mature... I think that needs to be emphasized more in middle school." Another student suggested that counselors tailor the program to

individual students: "It sometimes depends on where you're at, and when you go in for help with your counselor...he or she knows you... They know what to emphasize with you."

### Emphasis in Allocating Services According to Comprehensive Model Components

The counselor, principal, and teachers were asked to estimate the percentage of time allocated in the counseling and guidance program to each of the four TEA Comprehensive Model components. Table 17.2 summarizes their perceptions of counseling time allocations at this campus.

Overall, the largest gaps reported by participants in current versus ideal time allocations occurred in the areas of guidance curriculum and responsive services. Adult focus group members felt responsive services received more emphasis, whereas guidance curriculum was not emphasized enough. The counselor reported a much bigger gap than other staff in current versus ideal time allocations for guidance curriculum. She stated that time constraints prevented counselors from doing more guidance curriculum activities. She also commented, "I think that probably guidance [curriculum], the responsive [services], and the individual planning are the three most important [components]... I see system support as kind of secondary... It's more important that you address the actual student."

### Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach

The principal remarked, "The nature of the [counseling] job right now does not lend itself to as much preventive [focus] as I would like for it to... They

Table 17.2 Perceived* Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #17										
Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Counselor	10%	40%	40%	20%	40%	30%	10%	10%	0%	0%
Principal	35%	40%	20%	15%	35%	35%	10%	10%	0%	0%
School Staff*	22%	28%	32%	18%	30%	35%	17%	18%	0%	0%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

[counselors] do more on the intervention. They do more crisis management. The nature of these goes back to the clerical, the paperwork, and everything that is consuming more of their time.”

The counselor stated, “I think that society—I don’t know if there are more problems—but I think that some of the problems of society are spilling into the schools at a greater rate than they were in the past.

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*“I think that some of the problems of society are spilling into the schools at a greater rate than they were in the past.”*

—Counselor

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And, I think that the schools have realized that they have to be more proactive to combat some of these things that are ruining the academic environment. I think they see the counselor as one of the ones who try to put their finger in the hole of the dam.”

Although the counselor felt that counseling and guidance should be more preventive ideally, she said, “Realistically, the intervention activity—that has to take a majority of your time because you can’t turn your back and let a fire burn.... That’s not something you can say, ‘Well, I think I won’t put this fire out today’ and do some prevention instead. I see that as something that can’t be ignored.”

The counselor stressed that the program could become more proactive if there were enough counselors to handle the work load. She pointed out that guidance curriculum previously was taught through groups or in the classroom: “When we had another counselor and weren’t under such a work load, I myself ran three groups two years ago, and I know that it did help the students quite a lot.”

### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

According to all participants, lack of time is one of the main obstacles for counseling and guidance. One adult focus group participant remarked, “We have a number of kids that, again, I feel come to us lacking certain social skills that lead to some problems... [When] we [were] able to spend more time on the preventative end of it, those kids saw that there were other ways of dealing with conflict and dealing with

problems other than, say, violence... I think that eventually we would get... not all the problems, but we for sure would decrease the number of problems, and the kids would learn something in the process.”

As mentioned earlier, increased parental involvement would greatly help. The counselor stated, “Most of our parents... don’t come to the school that regularly because they are blue collar workers and a lot of them ... work two jobs.” The principal also contended that low parental involvement may be attributed to old school attitudes towards parents: “I think 15-20 years ago the school business said, ‘We know what’s going on; we’re smarter than you. We’ll invite you back up for a parent night, and we’ll invite you up for another time during the year, but we’re not going to let you talk too much, and we’re going to rotate you in and out and not let you do anything, but what we do, we do right.’” According to the principal, this attitude is changing, but the process is slow.

The principal believes that for a long time the school did not show pride for itself and, therefore, it was impossible for students to have pride in themselves or their school. This principal has proposed administrative changes such as relocating assistant principals out to different wings of the school building, and physical changes for the school such as brightening up the school with paint, additional lighting, and landscaping. He explained these moves as being made “basically to be in touch with the kids, and all that’s tied together with the same concept of when we can identify a problem. If we can identify a problem, then we can make our referrals [to guidance and counseling].”

Students suggested that awareness of counselors’ roles could be increased by introducing the counselors and describing their functions at a school assembly and by having counselors make more classroom visits. Further opinions from student focus group members about the school’s current counseling and guidance activities are summarized in Table 17.3.

### **Policy Concerns**

#### **Characteristics and Indicators of Success**

According to adult focus group members, a successful high school counseling and guidance program begins much earlier with younger students by “taking our program to the younger kids... selling our program to our future that’s coming up.” The principal felt that involving students earlier left more time later to

monitor the students as they progressed toward graduation.

The counselor believes a successful program emphasizes academic achievement without sacrificing personal growth and development, adding that a good counseling and guidance program “is there to take care of any immediate and pressing problems that are keeping the students from being successful.” She stated that success also is measured by “the number of students just simply making it through and graduating. That’s difficult for teenagers nowadays. That’s quite an accomplishment. And, I think when you see it—the dropout rate—starting to decline, or at least just holding even, I think that’s an indication. For me... I see a lot of students that come in and tell me how much I helped or they bring other students in [saying] ‘She can help you, you need to talk to her.’ That’s an individual type of reward, but you can tell when you’re helping by that.”

Being able to work one-on-one with students was another success indicator mentioned by adult focus group members. The counselor agreed that a successful program involves a great deal of one-on-one counseling time and counselors being able to work on preventive issues in the classrooms and in student groups.

Adult focus group participants viewed successful counseling and guidance programs as being those that are more preventive than reactive, resulting in schools with low dropout rates and high attendance. Group members also pointed out that communicating expectations for the counseling and guidance program—whether it be to the student, parent, teacher, staff or community—is vital.

### Messages for Policy Makers

The counselor suggested “letting counselors have a say before they [state-level policy makers] make a

**Table 17.3**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance at Campus #17**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor helps me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	9	—	1
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	10	—	—
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	10	—	—
D. understand the good things about my homework.	2	5*	4*
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	5	2	3
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	10	—	—
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	8	2	—
2. I am excited about the work we are doing in the guidance program	5	1	4
3. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.	9	1	—
4. I see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	—	10	—
5. The counselor is fun to be around.	10	—	—

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

policy would help. We feel like, ‘Well, here comes another rule, and did anybody that knows anything about the counseling department have any input in this? And if so, where? What department? Because it sure isn’t... ours.’ ” Similarly, the counselor cautioned policy makers about “mandating things [that] cost money that we [the counseling and guidance program] don’t have the money for.”

The principal felt that state-level policy makers could be more supportive by making assessment more consistent over time: “Standards change; expectations change. There’s a lot of talk out there now—rumors that we are going to do away with TAAS and... go to [an] end-of-the-year test. This type of thing.”

Students believed local, regional, and state-level policy makers should make efforts to avoid scheduling counselor meetings during school hours, which is taking time away from students.

## Potential Areas for Policy Attention

The following are based on interviewee responses indicating possible areas for policy attention.

- Provide funding for an adequate student-to-counselor ratio.
- Increase counseling and guidance resources to younger students.
- Offer more parenting skills training for parents to better support their children in school.
- Better educate all students about the counseling and guidance program and how it can help them.
- Better inform the public about services offered in a counseling and guidance program and the roles and responsibilities of counselors.
- Eliminate or decrease the number of non-counseling/guidance duties performed by counselors, and meetings they attend during school hours.
- Provide clerical help to the counseling and guidance program.
- Encourage more parent and community involvement with the counseling and guidance program.
- Increase the visibility of counselors so all students will be aware of them.

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## CHAPTER 6

# Multilevel School Case Studies

## Summary

### Characteristics of Campuses Selected

The three multilevel campuses included in the study were extremely different from one another and, in some cases, unique among the campuses in the study. One campus was the only campus in a district located in a rural area and did not have a counselor. Another was a special education campus serving all grade levels, including students who were wards of the State; the other was a Grades 7-12 campus. This chapter includes case study reports for all three of the multilevel campuses.

### Multilevel School Counseling and Guidance Programs

#### Goals and Expectations

The mission, goals, and objectives of the counseling and guidance program at the special education campus reflected the unique needs of those students, such as teaching students social, vocational, and independent living skills. At this campus, program expectations focused on meeting goals and objectives. The campus' counseling and guidance mission and goals were adapted from the districtwide ones. The secondary campus did not have a written mission statement; however, the interviewees articulated expectations for both the counselor and the delivery of counseling and guidance services. At the campus without a counselor, the principal felt the mission should be "Do it!" At this campus, the teachers and principal would expect a counselor to provide direct student services to meet students' needs.

#### Campus Implementation

The counseling and guidance programs on the multilevel campuses were implemented by the counselor

through coordinated efforts with school staff, parents, and the community. The two counselors reported a wide variety of duties, including providing individual and group counseling to students referred by school staff, parents, the counselor, or students themselves. Both counselors referred students to community resources when there was a need. At the special education campus, the counselor conducted weekly classroom guidance lessons and planned for and conducted all the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings and required paperwork. At the secondary campus, the counselor worked with students on vocational interests, provided college and career information, and coordinated the school's testing program. Both counselors also reported other duties, including some they considered not to be counseling and guidance duties.

On the special education campus, students' needs, including their counseling and guidance needs, are determined through the special education process including ARD meetings. How these needs will be met are spelled out in each student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). At the secondary campus, the needs assessment process was more informal, mainly through contact with teachers.

In terms of resources for the counseling and guidance program, the special education campus had a student-to-counselor ratio of 40 to 1, computer equipment, and volunteer clerical support. At the secondary campus, the student-to-counselor ratio was 350 to 1, and the counselor was pleased with the resources provided by the regional Education Service Center (ESC) and reported using many community resources. The secondary principal reported that current parental involvement was very low. At the special education campus, the counselor reported strong district, community, and parent involvement in the program.

## **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

Participants at all three campuses perceived societal changes that greatly affected students and their counseling and guidance needs. These included counseling becoming more social-work oriented, with schools doing what homes and churches used to do; a great increase in dysfunctional families; increased drug and alcohol abuse; an increased need for counseling because many parents were not home for their children; a lack of positive role models for students; and rapidly increasing student involvement in gangs. When asked about students not served, participants agreed that all students at the special education school were served, while at the secondary campus some participants felt that average students, female students, and freshmen and sophomores needed more counseling and guidance attention.

To fully implement a comprehensive, preventive model, the secondary campus participants would add at least another counselor, more clerical help, and a larger budget. At the special education campus the principal was satisfied with the current ratio of 40 to 1, while the counselor thought the ratio was adequate only if she was relieved of administrative duties and excess paperwork. This counselor would ideally like one counselor in each classroom. At the campus without a counselor, all participants wanted one full-time counselor. All three groups of interviewees felt that counselors should be relieved of non-counseling/guidance duties such as test administration, clerical work, class scheduling, and paperwork to be able to implement an ideal counseling and guidance program. Interviewees felt that strong district, parent, and community involvement was needed for a successful counseling and guidance program. The idea of having one agency through which to access all services for youth also was viewed positively on all three campuses. On all campuses, it was felt a counseling and guidance program should have a strong preventive focus with emphasis on direct services to students.

### **Policy Concerns**

#### **Areas for Policy Attention**

Interviewees on the multilevel campuses identified several areas for policy attention. They support

adoption of the TEA Comprehensive Model statewide, with adequate funding for student-to-counselor ratios, flexibility to meet unique school and student needs, and the removal of non-counseling/guidance duties such as test administration and clerical duties. At the special education campus, participants would like for special education policy makers and administrators to examine the paperwork and documentation associated with the ARD and to streamline the process. There also was a need to increase awareness of school staff, policy makers, and the public of the importance of counseling and guidance for all students, and encourage more community partnerships with schools and parent involvement, especially in light of the severity of problems youth are dealing with today and how counseling and guidance can help them. Those interviewed saw the need for increased resources for the counseling and guidance program in the form of larger budgets, higher salaries, and additional professional development opportunities.

### **Characteristics of Successful Programs**

Interviewees mentioned several indicators of a successful counseling and guidance program, including (a) a program based on the components of the TEA Comprehensive Model; (b) improvements in students' responsible behavior; (c) students developing other skills related to learning; and (d) changes in students' interpersonal effectiveness and communication skills. Strong collaboration and involvement among counselors, teachers, school administrators, and parents also were identified as characteristics of a successful program. Other program characteristics identified were adequate funding, a focus on the whole child, a high graduation rate, a low dropout rate, and an open door policy for parents that included parent support groups. One counselor characteristic—the ability to handle emergencies successfully—was also included.

# Multilevel School: Campus 19

## Background

### Campus Characteristics

This campus is located in a rural district with lower than average district wealth. It has fewer than 100 students enrolled in prekindergarten through Grade 8. Under the 1995 accountability system, academic performance at the campus was rated *Acceptable*, a rating received by the majority of campuses statewide. Table 19.1 summarizes the characteristics of the students, teachers, and counselors.

### Interview Sources

The school did not have a counselor. The principal was not interviewed separately but was interviewed as part of the adult focus group. For the student and adult focus group interviews, questions were revised to address meeting students' counseling and guidance needs at this campus without a counselor, as well as expectations for counseling and guidance programs and roles. Adult focus group participants included the principal, a parent, and all five teachers on campus. The student focus group included 12 students: six males and six females, all from Grades 7 and 8.

## Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

### Development and History on Campus

Of the 21 schools visited, this campus was unique in that it did not have a counselor or a formal counseling

and guidance program. When the campus has a special education student, there is access to a special education counselor for a short time each month. During the 1994-95 school year, there were no special education students on campus; thus, no special education counselor was required.

### Goals and Expectations

According to the principal, the mission of a counseling and guidance program should be: "Do it!" When students need counseling, any of the staff should be available and willing to talk with the student, no matter how trivial or serious the problem. The program should also address self-esteem and prepare students for a better life. Adult focus group members concurred that all staff should work with the counselor as a team in helping students deal with problems at home, in the community, or at school, because such problems affect students' academic performance.

According to the teachers, a counseling and guidance program should arm students with coping skills to address problems and issues they may confront at home or in the community. Teachers felt that the ability to cope takes priority because inability to cope prevents students from functioning academically. However, helping students develop coping skills and assisting them in addressing problems is sometimes beyond the expertise of teachers and needs to be addressed by a professional counselor. The best that teachers and other school staff can provide is a temporary patch — not a permanent solution. Both the principal and teachers stressed that in cases where a

**Table 19.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #19**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	0%	0%	Number of Counselor Positions	None
Hispanic	13%	0%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	n/a
White	87%	100%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	n/a
Other Minority	0%	0%	Number of Teachers	5
Economically Disadvantaged	70%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	7 Years
Limited English Proficient	0%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.  
Note: Ethnicity percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

problem is complex or “ingrained,” a trained counselor is needed.

The teachers’ experiences with counselors in neighboring schools have led them to believe that counselors spend most of their time on paperwork and scheduling and very little on the provision of direct services to students. This perception also was supported by the principal, who commented that in some of the schools he had visited he had seen counselors administer standardized tests. Giving such a responsi-

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*“Counseling, in my opinion, can include a hug, or can only be a hug, and our staff certainly caters to that.”*  
—Principal

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bility to counselors violates, according to the principal, the heart of a counselor’s job because it puts more distance between the counselor and the students.

### Campus Implementation

The principal said that although the school does not have a counseling and guidance program, he and staff try to address students’ counseling and guidance needs. He reported that every staff member on campus, including teachers, the secretary, the cook, and the bus driver, counsels students from time to time, and he felt that students’ needs are met to some extent. He also mentioned that staff take time to discuss problems with students rather than punish or dismiss them. Some teachers reported never having had a counselor in their schools when they were students and being unsure about counselors’ roles and responsibilities. Despite these limitations, the principal affirmed: “Counseling, in my opinion, can include a hug, or can only be a hug, and our staff certainly caters to that.”

When problems arise, school staff seek cooperation from students’ families by communicating directly with families or by visiting their homes, according to the teachers. Families often come to the school to discuss problems with the staff. Teachers also maintain informal community contacts with families. These contacts provide opportunities for teachers to talk to families about students.

For the last two years a parenting skills grant has allowed the school to address some areas that a coun-

seling and guidance program might address. The teacher who conducts the program explained that she makes home visits and teaches parenting, coping, and problem-solving skills to parents with pre-school-aged children. Because this community is so small and isolated, this teacher hopes to see, within the next few years, improved parenting skills in the community as a whole, as well as students better prepared for entry into school.

The teachers and principal concluded that participating in this study’s interviews had helped them see how united they are in working together on the same goals, with students and their needs coming first.

## Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services

### Areas Prompting Need for Change

The teachers and principal indicated the need for a full-time professional counselor. Having a counselor coming to the school occasionally, as happened last school year with the special education counselor, was perceived to have limited benefits because the students did not have time to get to know that counselor. In the student focus group many students indicated mistrust of someone they did not know. The teachers and principal emphasized that if the school cannot have a full-time counselor, they would prefer no counselor at all. Instead, teachers would like staff development on counseling and guidance so these issues could be addressed with greater competence and confidence.

The teachers recommended conducting a students’ needs assessment to identify what type of problems students have and where students may need assistance. They stressed that a counselor needed to become an integral part of the school—highly visible, known to all students, and a counselor who knows all students. Suggested ways this could be done included the counselor going into classrooms to give presentations, doing team teaching, or conducting activities with students so students would feel comfortable and not hesitate to seek her or him out. The teachers would like a counselor to teach coping skills, decision making skills, honesty, loyalty, and other values. These are important for students to learn at home, but many students do not, in their opinion. In addition to the counselor teaching in classrooms, teachers could refer students to the counselor for small group or individual sessions, or students could refer themselves. The teachers agreed that parents and the

community should be informed about counseling and guidance services provided. In this way, the counselor could be a resource to the parents and the community, too.

When students in the focus group were asked what they would like a counselor to do for them, the majority said they would not go to a counselor if the school had one. However, they thought a counselor might help some people who had problems or who got into trouble. Most students in the focus group who had no experience with a school counselor reported they were not sure what a counselor was supposed to do.

### Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs

If a counseling and guidance program were implemented, the adult focus group participants were asked what its primary focus should be—personal, academic, or career needs. The teachers and parent preferred emphasis on personal needs. The principal preferred to focus on academics, based on his belief that, “If you take care of academics ... then you will know how to take care of [the] personal.” All agreed that career needs should be emphasized the least. Teachers felt that personal development is the foundation for achieving academic and career goals. In their opinion, students who have personal problems cannot devote their attention to academics, which, in turn, could limit their future choices. Teachers reported that counselors in neighboring school districts emphasize career needs the most and personal development the least, which is the opposite of what they think the emphasis should be. When the focus group students were asked in which of these three areas they would most likely ask

for a counselor's help, the majority thought it would be for career needs, while two students said they would see a counselor for personal needs.

### Emphasis in Allocating Services According to Comprehensive Model Components

Adult focus group members were asked to estimate, based on counseling and guidance activities occurring now without a counselor, the percent of time spent on each of the four Texas Education Agency (TEA) Comprehensive Model components (see Table 19.2). The principal's perception was that counseling and guidance activities on campus presently focus most on responsive services. He did not report seeing much implementation of a guidance curriculum component. The teachers and parent perceived a more equal distribution between components such as guidance curriculum and responsive services. This difference may reflect teachers having interpreted the guidance curriculum component to include teaching self-esteem, coping skills, and communications skills, which they reported as part of their instructional curriculum.

According to the principal, school staff engage in prevention activities that are accomplished by example. In other words, school staff model appropriate behavior for the students, and older students are encouraged to serve as positive role models for younger students. Staff also practice tolerance and patience with students. While staff are usually aware of what is happening to families in the community because of the community's small size, not all problems can be anticipated. However, staff can usually get more information about family situations than in a larger district and, thus, are better prepared to deal

Table 19.2 Perceived* Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #19										
Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Principal	20%	40%	50%	10%	10%	20%	20%	30%	0%	0%
School Staff**	33%	40%	29%	29%	20%	15%	19%	16%	0%	0%
Parent	35%	30%	30%	30%	25%	10%	10%	10%	0%	0%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* At this school, the current time allocation reflected what group members saw as occurring now without a counselor. The ideal time reflects what they would like if their school did have a counselor.

\*\* Staff perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

with problems faster. Often, intervention can come earlier, preventing further escalation of problems.

### **Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach**

Adult focus group participants were asked how they would like a counselor to allocate time across the four components, if they had a counselor. One of the teachers indicated that responsive services should be the top priority. This teacher also thought that registration and scheduling tasks should not be done by

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*“Our students don’t get a lot of role models prior to arriving at this school, and that makes a difference.”*

—Principal

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counselors but should be done by other staff. The principal and teachers emphasized that a counseling and guidance program should define and confine the counselor’s responsibilities to direct services to students.

Ideally, the principal would use a strong preventive model, accomplished by doubling time now devoted to the guidance curriculum, increasing the time devoted to system support, and decreasing the time allocated to responsive services. Teachers, too, wanted to increase the focus on preventive activities, but they regarded prevention and intervention as equally important. The teachers and principal also recognized the importance of the system support component and how it can be used, especially in outreach efforts in the community.

The teachers and principal liked the TEA Comprehensive Model and would have no objection if this model is adopted statewide. They did not think counselors should have to supervise clerical staff.

### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

Because this community is small and located in an isolated, rural area, school staff see the needs of the community as unique. Because the community has no churches or other community organizations, the principal sees the school as the hub of the community. According to school staff, families have lived in this

area for many years and tend to distrust people outside the area they do not know. This distrust appeared in the students’ comments of not wanting to talk to someone they don’t know or not wanting to talk to a counselor at all. Teachers noted that a counselor, if hired, would probably have to be at the school for at least four years and be very visible during that time for the students to open up to her or him.

Despite its isolation, the teachers and principal acknowledged that the community is not escaping the problems of today’s society. For example, while crime is rare here, according to the principal, it did penetrate the community a few years ago with a murder that a number of students witnessed. He also added that many parents had drug and alcohol abuse problems that affected students. Teachers reported that dysfunctional families are also a reality dealt with by the school. One of the teachers noted that 90 percent of the students in her class did not come from a traditional two-parent family. According to school staff, this is largely a blue collar, agricultural community, with no professionals, and most of the parents did not go to college. The principal and teachers stressed that students do not have positive role models at home to emulate for molding a better future for themselves. According to the principal, “Our students don’t get a lot of role models prior to arriving at this school, and that makes a difference.” He also pointed out that some students did not like to come to school and were not interested in academics.

One teacher remarked that the community would expect a counselor to solve all of its problems, while another teacher felt that a counselor should be available to speak about whatever was needed. Teachers also stated that the counselor would need to be in close communication with community members, especially parents, and would need to be very understanding of this community and its attitudes about various things.

Student focus group members were asked about the types of characteristics they would prefer in a counselor and what they would like a counselor to do for them, if their school had a counselor. Their written responses are summarized in Table 19.3.

Overall, students expressed hostility and suspicion toward the counseling and guidance concept, although some of the students had attended schools with a counselor and viewed the counselors as helpful. One student said, “It’s weird going to people you don’t

know and telling them everything about you.” The students expressed liking the status quo and did not see any advantage to changing it. They saw a counselor as a stranger, an outsider, and indicated they would not trust such a person to keep information they provided confidential. For example, one student said, “I don’t need someone to tell me how good I am or things I need to improve in or anything.” A second student added, “Personally, I like how I am right now, and I don’t want to see myself in new ways.” And, from a third student, “I just don’t want anybody messing with me.”

Students in the focus group reported confiding in friends, parents, or siblings when they had a problem, or handling it by themselves. As one student said, “In a way, I am my own counselor.” According to these students, a counselor possibly could help students who have problems in class or at home. For students who expressed that they might go to a counselor (if one were available), they expected a counselor to help them with their school work, their relationships with teachers, or with family problems.

## Policy Concerns

### Characteristics and Indicators of Success

According to the principal, the best indicators of whether a counseling and guidance program is successful are a happy and well adjusted student body, with “little bickering between students and more cooperation,” a greater team spirit, and a stronger sense of ownership involving the school. According to teachers, a successful counseling and guidance program creates an atmosphere where students are eager to come to school and learn.

### Messages for Policy Makers

From the focus group interviews, the following comments were condensed into messages for policy makers:

- For districts/campuses without counselors, the staff would like training in counseling and guidance methods made available to teachers.

**Table 19.3**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance at Campus #19**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor [would help] me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	10	1	1
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	—	5	5
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	9	1	2
D. understand the good things about my homework.	6	5	1
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	4	6	2
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	6	4	2
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	2	6	4
2. I am excited about the work we [would be] doing in the guidance program	—	7	5
3. The counselor [should be] there when I need to talk to him or her.	6	4	2
4. I [would] see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	2	9	1
5. The counselor [would be] fun to be around.	7	2	3

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

- Counselors should not have to supervise clerical staff, administer tests, or conduct scheduling and registration, according to these interviewees.
- Districts should be consulted before resources are allocated for counseling and guidance programs. Staff at this campus indicated they wanted either a full-time counselor or no counselor at all. A part-time counselor would not meet their needs.
- Adult focus group members expressed appreciation for TEA coming to their school and being interested in the counseling needs of small schools.

## Potential Areas for Policy Attention

Comments from the interviews helped identify potential areas in need of policy attention. Staff at this campus indicated support for adopting the TEA Comprehensive Model for statewide use. Several students in the student focus group expressed dissatisfaction with the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Students were tired of hearing about it, did not see how it or school related to anything in the future, and felt that its questions are not representative of those covered in their schoolwork.

## Multilevel School: Campus 20

### Background

#### Campus Characteristics

This campus is in a major suburban district with much lower than average district wealth. There are 38 students enrolled in this special education facility, serving students from ages 6 to 22 years old. The school has elementary, middle, high school, and vocational programs. All students have multiple disabilities—nearly all are profoundly retarded and have one or more physical impairments. One-third of the students are wards of the State, live in a special home, and have parent surrogates. Professional personnel in addition to teachers and the counselor at this campus includes a nurse and physical therapists.

This is a year-round school with nine-week periods of school, followed by three weeks off. In each classroom there is one teacher, seven or eight students, and two aides (see Table 20.1).

### Interview Sources

Interviews were conducted with the principal, counselor, and adult focus group. The student focus group was not conducted due to the nature and severity of students' handicapping conditions. The adult focus group was composed of the counselor, principal, one parent, two parent volunteers, two teachers, one aide, the district counseling and guidance supervisor, and a parent surrogate.

**Table 20.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #20**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	8%	0%	Number of Counselor Positions	1
Hispanic	66%	52%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	None
White	26%	43%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	38:1
Other Minority	0%	5%	Number of Teachers	9
Economically Disadvantaged	97%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	9 Years
Limited English Proficient	32%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.

## Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

### Development and History on Campus

According to all focus group members, the current principal has made a tremendous difference in the counseling and guidance program. Prior to the principal's arrival in 1993-94, the counselor did not provide counseling services directly to students; rather, that counselor did paperwork for the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings, as well as other paperwork, as noted by both the current principal and counselor. The current counselor had been working at the school only a short time before the current principal started working at the school. The principal said, "I believe very much in counseling our student population." Therefore, in 1994-95 she and the counselor initiated a counseling and guidance program that provided direct services to students. The program is based on the TEA Comprehensive Model, with minor adaptations made for individual needs of these students receiving special education services. All students receive weekly classroom guidance lessons, with some students also receiving individual counseling. All interview participants were very enthusiastic about the positive changes seen in students, which they attributed to direct counseling and guidance services.

### Goals and Expectations

Based upon the district counseling and guidance mission and the campus improvement plan, the counselor and principal, with parent input, recently drafted a counseling and guidance mission statement for the campus: "The ... guidance plan is designed to develop positive self-concept, social skills and motivation necessary to prepare the students for desired learning and vocational activities needed for independent living skills in everyday life. This plan requires coordinated effort of all personnel, often involving continuous 'one-on-one' attention giving positive experiences, for good social growth, and good mental health." The specific goals of the program are (a) to help students develop positive self-concepts and motivation needed for independent learning and self-help skills; (b) to work with parents and teachers to enhance parental involvement; (c) to work with the community; (d) to make home visits as needed to provide the best education for students; (e) to create a positive school climate; (f) to schedule and assist with

ARD meetings; (g) to assist with special services to meet student needs; and (h) to organize the curriculum support sessions for school staff.

The principal saw the counseling and guidance mission to be one of developing positive student self-concepts and teaching students social and vocational skills through a concentration on life skills curriculum, with the focus on helping students to be as independent as possible. For the counselor, the counseling and guidance philosophy centers on providing students the educational services they need to learn life skills for use in the community; promoting the learning, motivation, and good mental health of students; and building an individual mission for each student

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*"I believe very much in counseling our student population."*

—Principal

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based on what he or she can do. The aide interviewed stressed the counseling and guidance goals include motivating students to strive for independence and helping them learn to make choices.

Focus group members acknowledged that the mission and goals stated reflected their expectations for the counselor and the counseling and guidance program. The counselor thought the community did not know how much counseling and guidance can help these particular students. She remarked that when people in the community think of counselors in general they see the counselor wearing a sign saying, "Yes, I listen," and think the counselor can help solve their problems.

### Campus Implementation

The campus counseling and guidance program was developed around the goals above. Two days a week, the counselor conducts 30-minute guidance lessons with each of the school's six classes. The classroom teacher, two aides, and one or more parent volunteers actively participate in these lessons, according to the counselor. She described the guidance curriculum as being based on what the teacher is teaching, as well as on what students can be successful doing. The principal said that the counselor presents the classroom lesson in a different way, usually through music, and reinforces what teachers are teaching. One day a week the counselor sees five students for 30-minute, indi-

vidual counseling sessions. These sessions are primarily focused on students going through the inclusion process (transitioning from being a full-time student at this facility to taking one or more classes at a regular education facility). Teachers can also refer to the counselor students who need to focus on specific skills or behaviors. In both guidance classes and individual sessions, the counselor uses a wide variety of musical tapes; art materials such as clay, crayons, sponge painting and finger painting; and storybook and stories with audiotapes, mirrors, puppets, and musical instruments.

One entire day a week the counselor attends and schedules ARD meetings and writes Individual Education Plans (IEPs) on counseling and guidance services for scheduled students, and completes related paperwork. In addition, several hours are spent throughout the week preparing and arranging for ARD meetings, as well as the required paperwork, which includes preparing any Individual Transition Plan (ITP) for students moving from the school into the community. The counselor pointed out that currently only one student is on an ITP. She also accompanies individual students or classes involved in Community Based Instruction (CBI), where students are taken into community restaurants or department stores to be familiarized with the community. She spends one to two hours weekly preparing counseling curriculum for student-specific needs. One day a week she observes students in their classes. If any classroom guidance lessons are canceled, make-up classes are held.

The counselor obtains speakers and plans activities for a monthly parent support group and coordinates any other parent involvement activities. She also plans topics and arranges for speakers for a monthly curriculum support/staff development session for school staff that is designed around student needs. When students are involved in inclusion, she visits the receiving school to see what the environment will be for that student, so instruction at this school can be planned around what is expected of the student. She makes home visits to assess the home environment to better plan the student's education or to help ensure the child's safety. The counselor manages the volunteer program for the school and is responsible for establishing school/business partnerships to secure support (financial, volunteer, CBI, etc.) for the school. She also attends weekly campus staff meetings as well as required district meetings. Because there is no assistant principal, when the principal is out of the building, the counselor is left in charge.

Teachers and the aide in the focus group noted that one very important part the counseling and guidance program provides is a different social environment for students from their daily and very regimented classes. Adult interviewees saw positive evidence that, through the counselor's use of music, many students, who previously had not responded at all, respond positively and enjoy the lessons. Because most students cannot communicate verbally or in writing, the counselor explained that she has to find other ways to reach students. The principal commented that students also have responded positively to the counselor's use of art.

All interviewees agreed that all students were served and their needs met. One teacher emphasized that this is everyone's responsibility, not just the counselor's. Another teacher believed that all students benefited from being taught to follow rules and behave appropriately. The principal added that she wishes even more time were available for counseling and guidance services. Participants were effusive in their praise about the changes they had seen in students during this school year. The counseling and guidance program, they felt, was really reaching students. One teacher and the counselor emphasized that many people believe students with disabilities cannot benefit from counseling and guidance services, but the successes they have seen this year have proven these people wrong. The parent in the focus group affirmed the very positive changes she has seen in her daughter's behavior and in school with the current principal and with the counseling and guidance program providing direct services. The surrogate parent who used to work at this school years ago remarked, "I am just real pleased because [of] how improved things are from when I was working in this area." The district director of counseling and guidance perceived more of a team effort at the school now than she had seen before. The principal concluded, "I think the counselor is very effective and very much needed in our school."

All participants stressed the extensive role the principal has had in refocusing the counseling and guidance program and in changing the counselor's role from processing paperwork to providing direct student services. The paperwork role was supported by previous principals, according to focus group participants. The counselor said, "I have full support of the administration here." In the opinion of all participants, the counselor is a professional and a valuable and essential team member. The counselor suggested

that reducing the required special education paperwork and not serving as an administrator in the principal's absence could strengthen her counseling role further.

Each student's needs, including their counseling and guidance needs, are defined through the ARD process and reflected in that student's IEP. All interviewees emphasized that the counselor, teachers, and other staff constantly communicate about students' needs. There is one full-time counselor for 40 students at this campus, but no additional staff are assigned to the counseling and guidance program. The principal said that the counselor can use the office secretary whenever she needs clerical help. The counselor pointed out that she has two parent volunteers who work with her weekly on required paperwork. The counselor has an office that she shares with a part-time speech therapist. She has a personal computer (PC) and, in her opinion, quite a bit of equipment and materials, including developmental experience kits with puppets, music, and stories that are used in the counseling and guidance lessons. She has a library of musical tapes for rhythm activities and musical instruments for students to hold. The counselor was satisfied with her room, equipment, and materials. The principal specified that the counselor's room is always available for her classes and parent support meetings. She explained that the counselor has a budget and makes all decisions for spending those funds.

The counselor reported having applied twice for counseling positions but did not know the number of other applicants either time. The principal had not hired a counselor directly but had been involved in one selection committee that reviewed many applicants. She thought a teacher with the appropriate credentials should be considered for a counselor position. She also believed the ideal counselor for this school should have great patience with students; be able to deal with very stressful situations; have excellent communication with parents, students, and staff; and be able to work with teachers.

According to both counselor and principal, the transition from a special education campus to a regular school campus is a very slow, involved process. The counselor explained that only 30 percent of students in this school will be able to participate in inclusion, the process of moving a student receiving special education services from a most restrictive environment (in this school) to the least restrictive environment (which for these students is in a special education classroom in a regular education school). Most students will

remain here for their entire schooling. She noted that the inclusion process is planned very carefully, occurring when both the teacher at this school and at the receiving school judge that a student can make the transition, and then only when the ARD committee also approves. The transition process begins with the special education counselor visiting the receiving school to see what the student's IEP will include. Prior to placement, teachers and the counselor at this school will conduct activities to prepare the student for experiences planned for him or her at the receiving school. The counselor stressed, "The basic thing is to try and get that child to succeed in the environment." She believed that successful inclusion involves motivated students who have good social skills. If the counselor or teachers think the student will not succeed in the new school, then he or she will not be recommended for inclusion.

The principal affirmed that the transition process is very slow and methodical, describing the following example. At first, the student may be sent for lunch or for one class at the receiving school for a nine-week period; the student will always go with a paraprofessional that he or she knows from the sending school. The remainder of his or her school time will be at the sending school. During the next nine weeks, another class at the receiving school may be added, and still another class may be added during the following nine weeks, and so forth. The student's success will be continually monitored, and he or she will be sent to the regular education campus only when it will be a successful experience. During the transition process, the counselor, teachers, other school staff, and volunteers continue to work with the student on activities similar to those he or she will experience at the receiving school.

The counselor reported that parents are involved in the guidance and counseling program in a number of ways. Parents come to school for ARD meetings and are involved in the ITP process, and the counselor sees parents twice a year on average. She provides a monthly staff development/support group for parents on topics that are fun and relaxing, with a focus on enhancing the home environment. These sessions often involve a community speaker, such as a police officer, who talks about home and neighborhood safety. She specified that parents also call her about problems. All interviewees stressed that strong parental involvement in the counseling and guidance program was essential for program success. The counselor reported that the regional Education Service

Center (ESC) has provided capable speakers on a variety of topics for staff development arranged for staff and parents.

Both counselor and principal agreed that community businesses and organizations have been very supportive when contacted. Local restaurants, grocery stores, and department stores have allowed students to visit as part of the students' community-based instruction. Some organizations have provided entertainment for students, such as a visiting clown who gave the students balloons. The counselor thought that businesses treated students very well — some businesses have donated fruit or other incentives for students and

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*“For us, academics is for them to sit down and be able to listen to a story for two or three minutes [and] to recognize the animals in the story.”*

—Principal

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have provided school volunteers. The counselor reported forming several business/school partnerships for the students' benefit. She also noted that district counselors are very involved within the community, which has strengthened community awareness and involvement with all district schools. The counselor was pleased with the strong involvement of volunteers in the foster grandparent program who often assist her with the guidance lessons.

### **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

#### **Areas Prompting Need for Change**

The counselor perceived an increase in students' need for a counseling and guidance program. She stated, “I think that the counselor plays a more mother-father role.” She attributed this to today's parents, at all income levels, not being home for their children. She stressed that students need positive role models and someone to teach them good values. From her perspective, this need was increasing at a spiraling rate. The counselor believed that student involvement in gangs and being out on the street will continue to grow.

All agreed that the counselor had too many non-counseling and non-guidance duties, such as arranging the ARD meetings and related paperwork, which was considered to be the largest obstacle. Teachers and the aide in the focus group noted the stress on the counselor resulting from the ARD process and how paperwork limits the time she spends on classroom observations and home visits. The counselor, principal, and district supervisor agreed that the counselor substituting as an administrator also decreased her time for direct student services. The principal pointed out that the counselor frequently receives urgent phone calls from doctors, parents, or principals at other schools involved in inclusion efforts, which sometimes disrupts her schedule.

### **Emphasis in Meeting Students' Academic, Personal, and Career Needs**

All participants affirmed that academic and personal needs receive the greatest and approximately equal emphasis in the counseling and guidance program, and both are integrated into each student's IEP. Given student characteristics, academic needs are not distinct from personal development, according to the principal. She said, “For us, academics is for them to sit down and be able to listen to a story for two or three minutes [and] to recognize the animals in the story — for example, to be able to match colors, to be able to match numbers, to make a sandwich, the different steps to make a sandwich, to get up and get those things from the kitchen.” She noted that for students in the medically fragile unit at this school, academics includes students being able to track light movement with their eyes. For some students, it may include going to the restroom independently.

Participants concurred that career needs were emphasized least by the counseling and guidance program and were addressed mainly through ITPs developed when students reach age 16. According to the counselor, only one student currently has an ITP. The parent surrogate, a retired school psychologist, saw students' career needs being addressed by teaching them pre-vocational skills such as sorting.

The aide remarked that personal development includes always giving students encouragement and treating them as individuals, not as stereotypes or labels. One teacher thought personal needs were the focus because counseling and guidance helps students learn how to express themselves and deal with their emotions. She continued, “Personal [development] is so important

because that is their life. Most of their life is personal. They aren't going off into academia somewhere." The counselor said, "I really believe that [meeting students'] personal [needs] is very important here for these particular children because each one of them may have 50 some-odd needs that are extremely important as opposed to a regular student in a regular school." The counselor and other group members expressed satisfaction with the balance among the three areas of student needs — academics, personal, and career — addressed by the counseling and guidance program.

### Emphasis in Allocating Services According to Comprehensive Model Components

Participants held different views of how the counseling and guidance program allocates its time, as shown in Table 20.2. The counselor specified that 60 percent of her time is spent on guidance curriculum, 5 percent on responsive services, 20 percent on individual planning, and 15 percent on system support. The principal perceived most of the counselor's time being spent on individual planning (60 percent), with another 10 percent spent on guidance curriculum and another 10 percent on non-guidance duties. These differences in the counselor's and principal's perceptions may reflect the integrated services at this campus or different interpretations of the four components. The parent and volunteers in the group divided the counselor's time equally among the four components, while staff estimated guidance curriculum takes slightly more time than the other components. The participating teachers concluded that the four components were balanced and took place simultaneously. The district supervisor assigned 30 percent to guidance curriculum and to responsive services, giving

individual planning 15 percent, system support 20 percent, and 5 percent for other non-guidance duties.

Under ideal circumstances, the counselor preferred allocating the same amount of time across components as she does currently. She believed that the majority of her time should be spent on guidance curriculum activities, with little time spent on responsive services. Although not indicated in her time allocations, the counselor had mentioned the need to decrease time spent on paperwork and administrative duties, and the need to increase time spent on direct services to students. Ideally, the principal recommended eliminating the 10 percent of other non-guidance duties and adding that to time spent on guidance curriculum. Staff, the parent, and volunteers generally did not indicate differences in their current allocations versus ideal time. The district supervisor ideally preferred decreased counseling time spent on responsive services and system support but increased time spent on guidance curriculum.

### Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach

All interviewees concurred that the counseling and guidance program is focused on prevention. The counselor estimated the program to be 75 percent prevention and 25 percent intervention. The district supervisor judged the program as being even more preventive than did the counselor. The principal viewed the intersessions offered for one week during each of the three weeks off as preventive because of the monitoring and extensive work done with students to prevent regression in skills (losing ground against gains they made in the previous nine weeks of school). The counselor, principal, and district supervisor

Table 20.2 Perceived Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #20										
Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Counselor	60%	60%	5%	5%	20%	20%	15%	15%	0%	0%
Principal	10%	20%	5%	5%	60%	60%	15%	15%	10%	0%
District Director	30%	48%	30%	18%	15%	18%	20%	13%	5%	0%
School Staff*	31%	30%	21%	22%	24%	25%	21%	22%	0%	0%
Volunteers/Parents*	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%	0%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff, volunteer, and parent perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

viewed the parent component as preventive. The counselor stressed that program changes based on the TEA Comprehensive Model and the provision of classroom guidance lessons to all students have shifted the program focus to prevention. The district supervisor reiterated the importance of prevention: "Action rather than reaction!"

### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

The principal concluded the current ratio of 38 students to one counselor was adequate, while the counselor concurred it was adequate only if her administrative duties and paperwork were removed. Under ideal circumstances, the counselor suggested a counselor in each classroom. Although the principal thought the counseling budget was adequate, the counselor did not. She explained that rather than spend time soliciting in the community for donations to buy student incentives

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*"Action rather than reaction!"*

—District Supervisor

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or other items, she preferred a larger budget to cover these expenses.

The counselor believed that district involvement through the districtwide counseling and guidance program and its focus on the TEA Comprehensive Model had helped establish a more preventive and comprehensive program at this campus. The key area the counselor, principal, and district supervisor perceived in which the district could help is to provide an assistant principal or other administrative solution to eliminate the counselor having to handle administrative duties when the principal is off campus. The district supervisor reported that previously this campus had had both a principal and an assistant principal, but the assistant principal position was deleted. The principal also suggested that the ESC provide more staff development specifically for counselors.

The counselor thought some parents perceive counselors as disciplinarians. In her view, parents are not sure how a counselor can help students with multiple handicaps who cannot communicate in typical ways. The principal expressed a belief that, because of the newness of the counseling and guidance program at this school, there is still a significant lack of awareness

about the counselor and her role, both among parents and the community. The counselor plans to increase knowledge about her role by providing parent support and training sessions, by being available to parents, and through making home visits. Her goal is to get more parents more involved.

Participants concluded that most members of the community do not know what students with disabilities are capable of learning, how counseling and guidance can help them, or how they can help the children and/or the counseling and guidance program. The counselor suggested that community members who are informed and knowledgeable could help educate the general public on these students and their counseling and guidance program. She specified that businesses could invite school staff to speak to their employees about the school and the program. She recommended the counselor's role be publicized through local news media, as has been done for teachers and principals. The counselor suggested businesses offer work and training opportunities to students. The principal thought all youth services being integrated through one agency was a good idea and could save the counselor time in contacting many agencies to find the appropriate services for a particular student and his or her family.

### **Policy Concerns**

#### **Characteristics and Indicators of Success**

The participants expressed the following as indicators of a successful counseling and guidance program, many based on the successes they perceived at their school during 1994-95.

- From the counselor's perspective, success includes a parent support group meeting regularly; having an open door policy for parents so they always feel comfortable coming to school; decreasing counselor paperwork; focusing on direct student services; defining better the counselor's role so non-counseling/non-guidance duties are not included; and delivering a guidance curriculum 50 percent of the time, while addressing students' personal needs the other 50 percent.
- The counselor and a parent, whose child has been in this school for 12 years, see success as improvement in student behavior, including social skills and abilities. For them, a successful program

includes a principal who supports the counseling and guidance program's provision of direct services to all students.

- One volunteer believed success to be students learning things that one didn't think were possible.
- All interviewed emphasized strong parent involvement in and support for the counseling and guidance program as being keys to success, including frequent parent contact with the counselor, as well as the counselor having ongoing communication and good rapport with parents.
- Teacher participants see a successful counseling and guidance program as focusing on the whole child.
- The principal and the aide interviewed include all staff and volunteers working together as a team and depending on each other as being an indicator of success as well as the counseling and guidance program being strongly correlated with classroom instruction.
- The principal added that program success includes strong counselor communication and rapport with students and teachers and the counselor handling emergency situations effectively.

### Messages for Policy Makers

The counselor stressed the importance of policy makers being aware of all the problems youth are dealing with in today's world (such as gangs), how severe problems are, and how much a counselor can help: "I think they [policy makers] think they need to go back to the three R's, but I think the three R's should include a C in there, and that means counseling."

Both principal and counselor were very supportive of the TEA Comprehensive Model and suggested that it be adopted statewide. The principal said, "I think everybody should use it. That would give uniformity to the program of counseling and that way everybody would be speaking the same language. It will be good for the state to have this type of comprehensive school guidance program everywhere." The counselor agreed, "Most everything is here [in the TEA Comprehensive Model]." She suggested some refinements to the TEA Comprehensive Model including all staff being in-

volved in assessment; even more emphasis being placed on parental involvement; a social work/home visitation guideline; and adding use of techniques appropriate to other counseling areas, such as special education. The principal and counselor also suggested

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*"They [policy makers] think they need to go back to the three R's, but I think the three R's should include a C in there, and that means counseling."*

—Counselor

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the Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC) be adopted statewide. The principal favored the TEMPSC's emphasis on professional responsibilities and on the counseling and guidance program including a strong parent and student focus.

The counselor emphasized the need for a clearly defined counselor role so administrators cannot dictate how counselors spend their time or what duties they perform. She recommended a large reduction in the administrative duties for counselors.

All staff interviewed stressed there was too much paperwork and documentation associated with the ARD process. Besides considerable time spent completing ARD paperwork, the principal noted that the counselor spends a tremendous amount of time calling and consulting with people to arrange schedules so all interested parties can participate in the ARD process. Interviewees remarked that there was a great deal of counselor stress associated with this because it limits direct services to students. Staff participants suggested a reexamination of the ARD process by the funding source to streamline the process and required documentation.

### Potential Areas for Policy Attention

The following potential areas for policy attention were identified from the interviews.

- Adopt the TEA Comprehensive Model and TEMPSC for all counselors statewide.
- Add social work/home visitation guidelines and flexibility in the TEA Comprehensive Model to meet the unique needs of students and schools.

- Eliminate non-guidance, non-counseling tasks, including administrative ones from counselors' duties.
- Considerably reduce paperwork and documentation required by the ARD process.
- Educate the public about students with multiple disabilities and how a counseling and guidance program can help them.
- Encourage businesses, local government, and community agencies to form partnerships with schools.
- Encourage parents to be more involved in their child's education including more involvement with the school.
- Provide more counselor-specific training at ESCs.

## Multilevel School: Campus 21

### Background

#### Campus Characteristics

This campus is located in a fast-growing, non-metropolitan district with much lower than average district wealth and serves 338 students in Grades 7-12. Under the 1995 accountability system, academic performance at the campus was rated *Acceptable*, a rating received by the majority of campuses statewide. Table 21.1 summarizes student, teacher, and staffing characteristics at this campus.

#### Interview Sources

Interviews were conducted with the principal, counselor, adult focus group, and student focus group. The adult focus group included the counselor, principal, four parents, three teachers, the school nurse, the school librarian, and a community representative. The student focus group consisted of two eighth graders, two ninth graders, three juniors, and two seniors.

### Campus Counseling and Guidance Program

#### Development and History on Campus

According to the counselor, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Comprehensive Model is the basis of the school's counseling and guidance program. This and other small schools using the TEA Comprehensive Model worked together a year and a half on developing their programs. This counselor has been at this school for the past four years. Prior to her full-time employment, the school's counseling and guidance program operated with her as a part-time counselor.

#### Goals and Expectations

The mission and philosophy statement for this secondary school was developed through a collaborative effort by the counselor, former principal, and teachers, according to the counselor. A copy of the statement was not available at the time of this interview. The

**Table 21.1**  
**Student, Teacher, and School Staffing Characteristics at Campus #21**

Characteristics	Students	Teachers	Staffing	
African American	1%	0%	Number of Counselor Positions	1
Hispanic	7%	0%	Number of Counselor Vacancies	None
White	92%	100%	Student-to-Counselor Ratio	338:1
Other Minority	0%	0%	Number of Teachers	32
Economically Disadvantaged	30%	n/a	Average Teaching Experience	8 Years
Limited English Proficient	0%	n/a		

Source: TEA, 1994-95, PEIMS, and case study interview data.

counselor stated that the mission of the counseling and guidance program was to identify areas of need for students in both academics and their personal lives, and then to place those students in contact with resources that can help meet those needs. From the principal's perspective, the mission is "to assist our students in preparing for the future...[and] to prepare productive, responsible students to go out into the work world." Teachers and parents echoed similar sentiments and added that the counselor was there for students, and that the students were comfortable with sharing problems and asking questions of her. The counselor and principal agreed that the need for a counseling and guidance program reflects the fact that many factors prevent students from getting an education and developing a sense of self-worth.

The counselor stated that everyone sees the role of the counselor differently. The counselor sees her role as giving direction to the school's counseling and guidance program, with school staff and community members actually making the program work. From the principal's point of view, the role of the counselor is to work with students' individual needs and individual planning, work with parents and administration, and to be a support system for teachers.

Teachers and parents view the counselor's responsibilities in very similar ways. A parent reported that the counselor put both teachers and parents in contact with resources to help the students. Parents see the counselor as a person who helps get their children pointed in the right direction in terms of college and career. The counselor is someone their children feel able to talk to, whether it is about a crisis, college, or career concerns. The community representative added that the counselor helped find the means for the child of a family he knew to go to college.

## Campus Implementation

The counselor reported that school staff, everybody from the principal to the janitors, with the aid of the community and Education Service Center (ESC) resources, work together to implement the goals of the counseling and guidance program: "I am not the guidance program. Everybody here is the guidance program, and we all work together." According to the counselor, she coordinates these individuals and resources. According to the principal and counselor, teachers play an important role in the counseling and guidance program. The principal sees the teachers as the school's "first line [for] counseling and guidance,"

and noted that the counselor is there for their referral. Because the teachers have interaction with all students on a daily basis, they are more likely to see both the problems and successes of the students. Several adult focus group members reported that teachers help implement the counseling and guidance program by making referrals, helping with the guidance curriculum, and acting as mentors for students. A teacher described the mentoring as trying "to kind of be that extra special person for them [students] whether it is emotional stuff or... what direction they are heading in school." The counselor stated that "one of the best

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*"I am not the guidance program.  
Everybody here is the guidance  
program, and we all work together."*  
—Counselor

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things that's happened to us is our art teacher...she is fantastic, not only as an art teacher, but as a person....You have that group of far out kids, and they don't particularly fit in a school in an area like this—your artistic, creative type kids who probably are tinkering with drugs, who walk the edge, who fall off the edge. She [the art teacher] works very well with those kids and because of it, we've had a lot of success with a lot of these kids." Another teacher explained how the counselor, working with the school's Future Homemakers of America organization, sponsored a program on violence within relationships that was presented in the home economics department.

The counselor added that a counseling program reflects the personality of the counselor and what the counselor feels confident doing. The area she enjoys most is career counseling. Both the counselor and the principal mentioned that the counselor has developed a career and vocational section in the school's library, and she presents this type of information to the students in various classes. Several members of the adult focus group reported that the counselor works closely with students on career decision making and career-related issues.

The counselor reports spending a large portion of her time linking the school with outside resources to fill gaps in the school's program. According to the counselor, community sources, both local and neighboring, have provided students with individual counseling and support groups on various topics such as drug and alcohol abuse, gambling, grief, and divorce.

Outside sources have been called in to present grade-level appropriate topics such as interviewing, goal setting, motivation, dating and violence, and health-related issues including suicide prevention and sexually transmitted diseases. Currently, a social worker is completing counseling hours for her Marriage and Family Therapy certification by working with some of the students after school. A member of the focus group stated that the counselor does a lot of work in the community and maintains the program through her community involvement and continuing education.

According to the principal and student focus group members, the school has a student mentoring program that involves students helping students. Through this program, sixth and seventh graders meet with seniors and the assistant principal for an orientation to high school. This orientation also provides information about what the counseling and guidance program has to offer.

Parents indicated that the counselor has been there for their children to discuss both academic and personal problems and also has been helpful to children facing crises such as a death in the family or teenage pregnancy. Regarding students, one focus group member stated, “[the counselor is] never there to make decisions for them, but she presents the options that are available to them.” Students agreed that the counselor helps them build up confidence in themselves, helps point out new things, explains the importance of tests such as the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), is available to talk to about school and personal problems, and as one student noted: “[She] knows what it is like to be a kid.”

The counselor reported that during development of the mission and goals for the school’s counseling and guidance program, teachers were surveyed to determine areas of student need. During the next year, the school will conduct a parent-student survey. A career needs assessment also is conducted for students beginning in the eighth grade. In addition to career assessment, the counselor added, “This year we’re starting with this group [eighth graders] and we’re going to do IEPs [Individual Education Plans] generally on every child.” She also noted that seniors had participated in a 9- to 10- day career seminar, while juniors and seniors participating in the focus group reported that the counselor had administered interest inventories to help them determine career options.

Regarding resources, the principal stated that the school is in a property-poor area; therefore, they have to be frugal with spending. Although the budget for the counseling and guidance program is small, the principal confirmed it was in proportion to everything else they can afford. With only one counselor for this school, the current 1994-95 student-to-counselor ratio is approximately 350 to one. However, the principal indicated it was not high enough to justify hiring another counselor, even with the ratio being a little higher than he prefers.

As reported earlier, the counselor stated that she calls upon many community members and organizations for assistance and support, as well as resources in a larger

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*“[She] knows what it is like to be a kid.”*  
—Student

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city nearby. According to the counselor and the principal, the ESC is also a good resource for providing audiovisual materials and career-related information.

The counselor and the principal reported no clerical support for counseling and guidance. However, the counselor does have some access to the principal’s secretary. The principal added that he is responsible for scheduling and that his secretary acts as the registrar for the school. The counselor works as the school’s testing coordinator and teachers indicated that the counselor is a resource for information and provides help with test interpretation. Both the principal and counselor indicated that no computers had been allocated to the counseling and guidance program, but the counselor has access to one in the school’s computer lab. The counselor commented that if the school purchases new computers, she will be getting one of the older ones for her use.

### **Perceived Need for Change in Campus Counseling and Guidance Services**

#### **Areas Prompting Need for Change**

According to the counselor, because of changes in society the school is being asked to do things the home and church used to do. She further added that these responsibilities, which now fall “at the feet of the guidance counselor,” make counseling “much

more social work” oriented. As a result of these societal changes, she contended that the counselor’s position has been transformed from someone who “came to school once a week and arranged tests” to someone who “with...academic work doesn’t have enough time to do all the social work.”

When members of the focus groups were asked about student needs that were not being met, several groups were mentioned. A teacher in the adult focus group indicated that needs of female students in the school were not being met. Although she felt the counselor has done a lot in helping female students see career opportunities, she believed that the counseling and guidance program needed to direct more attention toward female students’ self-esteem and personal image issues. She noted that it is important for the female students to know “they are...valuable person[s], whether they have a boyfriend or not.... they are a valuable group of people, and that they do have some self-worth that is not tied to somebody else or something else.... It just seems that the girls, especially in a small area...do not see that there might be other things out there for them.” Another member of the adult focus group stated that attention was paid to “the brightest and most ambitious...and those in crisis.” She indicated, however, that the program has fallen short in the middle part of the spectrum—those students who are doing okay and making Bs. Similarly, one ninth grader stated that although there were groups and programs for juniors and seniors, he did not think there were groups for freshmen. The counselors’ estimation was that the counseling and guidance program currently meets the needs of approximately 80 percent of the students but that it is hard to meet the needs of all students because “some students do not want to be met.”

The counselor stated that an adequate ratio of students to counselors greatly affects what the counselor can do: “If she’s going to do registering and all that, 1 to 100 would do you in if you were going to try to fulfill what TEA wants. I don’t know how you can register and do all those other things, and do it adequately.” Ideally, the counselor felt that the ratio should allow the counselor to “offer classes and yet still be personable and warm and know each child individually.”

When asked what interferes most with her time to provide guidance services, the counselor stated that the amount of daily clerical duties was problematic in that she is busy covering phones, filling in for the

school secretary, working with student transcripts, and so on. One of the adult focus participants confirmed that the counselor, like other staff members at a small school, must often spend time doing things like clerical work, selling tickets in the cafeteria, and helping out at athletic events. This participant felt the counselor’s job could be helped with clerical or volunteer support. The principal agreed that the counselor does not have a whole lot of clerical help and at times must assist his secretary with transcripts, grades, and so forth. Although the scheduling is primarily done by the principal and his secretary/registrar, the counselor said she has helped train the new registrar.

In addition to her clerical responsibilities, the counselor and principal report that the counselor is the testing director for the school, which takes up a great deal of her time. As testing director she is responsible for all tasks related to test administration, including counting the test booklets, distribution, and collection.

In addition to the shortage of clerical assistance staff and what the principal calls a “bare bones budget,” the counselor stated that there are physical space limitations: “The logistics of testing just blows your mind...used to be we could test in the library, [but] now we’ve outgrown it.” Furthermore, the counselor has limited private office space for herself.

Although the principal reported this to be a trend everywhere, it was his opinion that low parental involvement in the school affects the counseling and guidance program. An example the principal gave was a college financial aid night, for which the counselor sent letters home to parents with students, but the resulting participation was minimal. According to the principal, “We probably had the parents of five kids...It would help her to have...more parental involvement.”

### **Emphasis in Meeting Students’ Academic, Personal, and Career Needs**

Participants in the adult focus group generally agreed that addressing career needs was emphasized most in the counseling and guidance program on this campus. Overall, teachers felt the counselor did a good job supplying students with career information and assessing areas of students’ career interests. However, one teacher stated, “As far as getting the [career] information to the kids, I think we do well at that...but

if we do not prepare them [academically] to meet those careers, the information does not do them any good.” The counselor did see room for improvement: “I need to get more program structure. I need to have more organization...The use of time in the career program, guidance program for me...sometimes...is not used in counseling duties.”

Several teachers noted that the least emphasized area in meeting student needs was academic. One teacher stated, “It is not because we are not trying, it is because we are not able to.” Teachers reported that budget and school size affect the type of program they can offer: “We are small, and money a lot of times is tight, so we do not have enough teachers sometimes to offer...as wide of variety of classes and different type classes that you could have in a larger school.” Also, teachers noted that there is a great need for technical preparation courses (tech prep). Although she credits the counselor with “rallying to get information about tech prep,” one teacher stated: “We could be a little more innovative, be branching out and researching a little bit more about what we could offer the kids.” The school librarian added, “I think perhaps we need to strive a little harder in that [academics]. I do think that [in] a smaller school...when you have fewer students, you can do more with them.” The counselor agreed with the teachers, mentioning that offering higher level classes and having better equipment would improve the academic area.

Whereas the small size of the school was viewed as a detraction to the academic area, participants felt that a small school community enhanced their ability to meet the personal needs of students. One teacher reported

that the small size allowed staff to know the students and most of the parents and be aware of problems that were going on with the students. One parent affirmed, “I do not think that I have ever known a group of teachers and staff that provided more personal support and assisted children with self-esteem than this school. I have just never seen it. They are, everyone, into making sure that child is the very best he can be and making sure that he has got a positive image of himself.”

In contrast to school staff, parents speaking from experience with their own children were of the opinion that students’ academic, personal, and career needs were given generally similar emphasis in the counseling and guidance program at this campus.

### Emphasis in Allocating Services According to Comprehensive Model Components

The counselor, principal, staff, parents, and a community representative were asked to estimate the percentage of time the counseling and guidance program allocated to each of the four TEA Comprehensive Model components. Table 21.2 contains the participants’ perceptions of counseling time allocations at this campus.

The largest gap in perceptions among adult focus group members is in the time currently allotted to the guidance curriculum, with the counselor reporting about 5 percent of her time spent on guidance curriculum and the others perceiving 17 percent or more of the counselor’s time spent on this area. The counselor noted that guidance curriculum is “probably neglected

**Table 21.2**  
**Perceived Percentages of Counseling Time Allocations at Campus #21**

Interviewees	Guidance Curriculum		Responsive Services		Individual Planning		System Support		Other	
	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal	Current	Ideal
Counselor	5%	20%	25%	25%	35%	40%	10%	10%	25%	0%
Principal	20%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	15%	20%	15%	5%
School Staff*	20%	31%	18%	22%	27%	26%	13%	15%	23%	5%
Parents*	19%	24%	28%	27%	25%	27%	19%	21%	10%	6%
Community Representative	40%	35%	30%	25%	20%	25%	10%	10%	0%	5%

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance Programs, Adult Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

\* Staff and parent perceptions about percentages of counseling time allocations are averaged.

the most... because we don't get around to it." To compensate for time constraints, the counselor relies heavily on community resources to support this area. Ideally, the counselor indicated that 20 percent of her time should be devoted to the guidance curriculum.

The biggest gap reported by participants in current versus ideal time allocations occurred in the "Other" category. With the exception of the community representative, participants felt that the school's counseling and guidance program spent anywhere from 10 percent to 25 percent of time on miscellaneous duties. The counselor, who estimated 25 percent, stated this time is spent completing clerical duties such as typing, answering the phone, and responding to the mail but did not include time spent on testing duties. Other focus group members had included duties such as TAAS administration and substituting for teachers and the school secretary.

### **Need for a More Comprehensive, Preventive Approach**

It was unclear whether or not focus group members feel the school's counseling and guidance program should be more proactive and preventive than it currently is. Comments made throughout the course of the interview were mixed. On one hand, some members were reporting the balance between prevention and intervention to be 90:10 or 80:20 or 75:25, while on the other hand, some were reporting mostly responsive activities (which are typically classified as intervention). One teacher who reported 75:25 stated "a lot more intervention goes on [in] individual situations that everybody is not aware of...I know anytime I hear of a student with a problem, whether it's an eating disorder or...pregnancy or anything like that, I always go to [the counselor]...a lot of people don't even know that takes place, so I think there's more going on than we know as a group."

Another teacher reported that she felt the program had offered more preventive activities in the past such as sex education and teen pregnancy classes. This teacher commented that, even though the students act like they are aware of choices, she still believes the program needs to work on prevention. Participants commented that because the school has limited intervention resources, most of its assets were geared toward prevention.

As mentioned earlier, participants were in agreement that increasing parental involvement would greatly improve the counseling and guidance program. A parent stated, "I think there are parents that want to help; they just don't know how. And they're not going to volunteer unless they are approached, but I think there's a lot of parents that would be willing to get involved."

### **Factors Relevant to Adoption of a Comprehensive, Preventive Model**

When asked how and what could be changed to allow a more comprehensive and preventive counseling and guidance model, suggestions among all participants

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*"I think there are parents that want to help; they just don't know how."*

—Parent

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were similar. Most of the participants agreed that counselor time is one of the factors that is problematic. As mentioned earlier, the counselor stated that the right ratio of counselors to students is dependent on what is expected to be accomplished with the counseling and guidance program.

When asked what recommendations they would make, several students suggested hiring an additional counselor. One student stated that it might be helpful if there were one counselor who handled the personal issues and another who concentrated on career and academic issues. Two students suggested that having another counselor would give students a choice in who they could talk to about their issues. For instance, one student stated hiring a male counselor might be helpful: "Sometimes guys may not like talking to a woman." Further opinions from student focus group members about the characteristics of the current counselor and what she does for them are summarized in Table 21.3 on Page 132.

Several members of the adult focus group mentioned the lack of awareness of the counselor's responsibilities as being a road block to adoption of a comprehensive, preventive program. One teacher stated that she thought it was important for everyone—faculty, administrators, and community—to understand the counselor's role. The teacher felt that if these groups were educated about what the counselor does, they

might be able to see what part they can play in the program. Staff stated the need to communicate the counselor's job description to the school's administration, staff, and the community because, as one teacher stated: "I don't think that they really are aware that she does a lot of things that don't fall under her job [description]." This teacher also felt that staff and community members may still hold the perception that the counselor's job has not changed since they went to school when the counselor's job was basically to arrange students' schedules. Members in the adult focus group initially assigned a significant percentage of counselor time to TAAS administration only to realize through a group activity that the counselor's responsibilities, as reflected in the TEA Comprehensive Model, did not include test administration.

Removing non-counseling duties was another suggestion from participants. One student suggested that hiring a secretary might be as beneficial as hiring another counselor because so many things seemed to be the counselor's duty, and any support would be helpful.

## Policy Concerns

### Characteristics and Indicators of Success

One of the most-often mentioned characteristics of a successful counseling and guidance program was involvement. Members agreed that the involvement of not only the school staff but that of the parents and the students was needed. One teacher stated, "If your parents don't care at home, then it's going to affect the program. I think a good guidance counseling program has parents who are involved, teachers who are involved to try to intervene, prevent any type of problem a student might come across—whether it's academic failure or emotional distress or whatever." This teacher also felt that everyone involved needs to use the counselor as a resource, and that students need to know they have someone to go to and use as a resource as well.

Communication was another characteristic reported to be essential for a successful counseling and guidance

**Table 21.3**  
**Student Focus Group Opinions About Counseling and Guidance at Campus 21**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Unsure/ Don't Know
1. The counselor helps me . . .			
A. understand the good things about myself.	9	—	—
B. see myself and the world in new ways.	7	—	2
C. understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be.	9	—	—
D. understand the good things about my homework.	3	—	6
E. understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work.	9	—	—
F. understand how important it is to take tests—like the TAAS.	9	—	—
G. understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests like the TAAS.	9	—	—
2. I am excited about the work we are doing in the guidance program	1	—	8
3. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.	9	—	—
4. I see the counselor only when I am in trouble.	—	9	—
5. The counselor is fun to be around.	9	—	—

Source: TEA, Statewide Study of Counseling and Guidance in Public Schools, Student Focus Group Interview, Spring 1995

program. Participants stressed the importance of communication among team members. One teacher stated that the counselor needs to communicate to the teachers special needs or issues of the students. For example, if the counselor knows the child comes from an abusive home, this information could help the teachers better understand that child. Another participant believed it is vital for parents and students to tell the school what their needs are so that the school can put its resources to work.

Another characteristic pointed out by an adult focus group member to be essential for success was funding. According to this participant, “You can’t stress staying ahead of the game academic-wise if you don’t have the funding to get the computer labs and all the equipment and the staffing that’s necessary to do these jobs and the functions that they are required to do.” One participant stated that community and parental commitment can be measured by willingness to increase the area’s tax base to provide more money for the school and program.

The principal stated that two indicators of a successful program would be graduating a high percentage of the students and having a dropout rate below the state average. One focus group member commented that the counseling and guidance program should be evaluated the same way the school’s academic program is evaluated—by the subsequent success of students who graduate.

### **Messages for Policy Makers**

The counselor stated that policy makers should remove the expectation of testing from the counseling and guidance program and suggested that hiring additional staff to administer tests would decrease this burden and allow more time for guidance. In addition, the counselor feels policy makers should evaluate the pay schedule for counselors. She reported that most of the counselors are making less than they would be if they were teaching.

Increasing awareness among school staff of the role and responsibilities of the counseling and guidance program would be beneficial, according to the principal. He also suggested that policy makers help with the preventive aspect of counseling and guidance programs by coming up with proper counselor-to-student ratios for the different types of schools that exist. In addition, he stated that policy makers could offer support by providing extra training for counse-

lors because some of the counselors he had been “associated with were not strong as far as the individual counseling aspect.” When asked if he thought counseling roles and responsibilities should be mandated, he replied that if funding were available, then guidelines would be helpful. He noted that additional funding would help in not only relieving the counselor of clerical duties but also with the student-to-counselor ratio.

### **Potential Areas for Policy Attention**

Further comments from the interviews helped identify other potential areas for policy attention. As mentioned earlier, the principal, counselor, and other members of the focus groups stressed the importance of increasing awareness of the counselor’s role and increasing the amount of funding available for the school.

In addition, focus group members stressed that decreasing non-counseling duties, such as paperwork and TAAS testing responsibilities, is necessary for the counselor to be better able to perform her job. The counselor agreed that extraneous, non-counseling duties interfere with her ability to do more work with the students directly.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Protocols**

## SITE VISITS' PROTOCOLS BY SECTION

EXPECTATIONS	ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS	FOCUS GROUPS ADULTS	FOCUS GROUPS STUDENTS	OTHER
moderators (p. 2)	counselor (pp 8-9)	moderator reminder of goals (p.13)	moderator reminder of goals (mail) (p.17)	evaluation of research team and site visit (N/A)
assistant moderators (p.3)	principal (pp 10-11)	focus group discussion guide prepared for them to read (mail) (p.14)	student survey (p.20)	demographic page (N/A)
note taking (p.4)	pre-interview instructions (read out (mail) (p.12)	loud prior to interview)	moderator introduction (mail) (p.19)	flip charts (letter size) (pp. 22-23)
check-list (pp 5-6)		adult focus group (p.16)	student focus group "interview" (p.21)	flip charts (letter size) (pp. 24-25)
	principal and counselor interview content guide (mail). (p. 7)	adult focus group discussion content guide (mail) (p.15)	student focus group content (mail) (p.18)	

 denotes what is to be mailed out

Packages of materials to be mailed will be accompanied by:

- (1) letter # 2 to principal of campus
- (2) cc'd to contact district person (mail interviews only so the district is aware of what is being asked)
- (3) a copy of the original consent to participate form signed by superintendent
- (4) 2 xerox copies of : (a) proposed legislative changes, (b) Policy Research Report # 5 xeroxes, (c) TEMPSC duties, and (d) TEA guide program table.

## EXPECTATIONS OF MODERATOR

### **Before the Focus Groups**

- Schedule and confirm interviews.
- Share the coordination of logistics with assistant moderator(s) (check-list fulfillment, room, tape recorder, microphones, mail-out prior to interviews, and backup tapes or batteries.).
- Practice the introduction of the study for each interview.
- Be comfortable with the questions.
- Be well rested and attentive throughout.
- Distribute and explain the purpose of the demographic page and the evaluation form. Both forms are optional. Explain that they can fill it out and put it in the sealed self-addressed envelope and give them back at the time or mail them later.

### **During the Site Visits and the Focus Group(s)**

- Arrive 30-45 minutes early.
- Determine the spatial set-up of the focus group.
- Welcome people.
- Begin close to designated time and conclude by designated ending time.
- Monitor your time to be sure all questions are discussed.
- Hold back your opinions.
- Avoid answering questions.
- Use pauses and probes to obtain information.
- Control your verbal and nonverbal reactions to participants.
- Use subtle group facilitation skills.

### **Concluding the Focus Group:**

**Conclusion** (1 minute or so per participant), **oral summary** (3 minutes), and **participants' feedback**

- At the end of the focus group discussion, the moderator will ask each participant to state (for a minute or so) the highlights of the focus group. After allowing all the participants to state their views, the moderator will provide a brief summary (3 minutes) of these highlights. Then the moderator will invite participants to offer additions or corrections. This oral summary is the first opportunity to highlight the key points of the discussion and to obtain verification from participants. Remain descriptive and non-judgmental.
- After these have been discussed ask the ending question "Have we missed anything?"
- Have available evaluation sheets and pre-addressed envelopes to distribute at the end of interviews.

### **After the Focus Group(s)**

- Collect demographic page from participants.
- Conduct debriefing following the order in which the questions were asked, highlighting variation by demographic (age, gender, etc.) or any other attributes that qualify the uniqueness of the focus group at hand.
- File all documentation (charts, surveys, literature, etc.) related to site by name of school.
- Label tape for transcriptionist. Provide transcriptionist with seating arrangement drawing for microphone numbers.
- Make sure that all the notes are organized by site, by type of interviews and that the all field notes are filed as well.

<b>EXPECTATIONS OF OTHER STAFF--IF PRESENT<sup>1</sup></b>
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**BEFORE THE FOCUS GROUP:**

**Equipment**

- Set up all the recording equipment prior to the focus groups (find plugs and arrange seating appropriately). Bring extension cord, microphones, etc. following checklist. Bring flip-charts and be ready to hand them to moderator when appropriate.

**Arrange Room**

- Rearrange chairs and table so that everyone can see each other. Be prepared to leave materials necessary for moderator and participants on top of the table.

**Meet participants as they arrive.**

**Sit in designated location**

- Assistant moderator should sit outside the circle, opposite of moderator and close to the door. If someone arrives late, take the person outside the room, brief them as to what is going on--current topic of discussion, and give them necessary materials.

**DURING THE FOCUS GROUP:**

**Take notes throughout the discussion.**

- Use the designated note taking guide (lap-top optional).

**Monitor recording equipment.**

- Occasionally glance at the tape recorder to see if the tape is moving. Label tapes so you know the correct order and it is clear for transcription.

**Do not participate in the discussion.**

- Respond only if invited by the moderator. Control your non-verbal reactions no matter how strongly you feel about an issue. Smile when you direct your attention to someone. Be reassuring. Try not to express that you are tired or that you want to leave or need a break.

**AFTER THE FOCUS GROUP:**

**Debriefing (debriefing discussion must be recorded)**

- Participate in the debriefing using demographic or role characteristics as variables which highlight the uniqueness of that site. Review question by question. No more than 25 minutes should be devoted to this activity and must be done as soon as is possible after the focus group interview. It is OK to bring in information of different interviews, although the debriefing is mostly for the adult focus group. This is simply a way of recapsulating important information that may be forgotten after 20 sites.

**Feedback on debriefing summary.**

- Provide feedback on the summary with the moderator.

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<sup>1</sup> These are responsibilities of the contractor if they are the only person at the site. If there is another research member present (e.g., EGS' or TEA's staff), they should do as much as is possible to free the moderator and fulfill the tasks above and the ones outlined below as well.

<b>NOTE TAKING ( MODERATOR<sup>2</sup>)</b>
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- Make a sketch of the seating arrangement on a paper and integrate it to the package that is to be turned in with the debriefing and preliminary analysis.
- The moderator is not expected to take written notes during the discussion.<sup>3</sup> If it is possible for the moderator to do so without affecting the spontaneous flow, this is desirable. However, if a second person is present, it is important that they take notes. These field notes must be filed with the other documentation from the site and used in the debriefing.
- It is important to try to identify by role who is saying what (C = counselor, T = teacher, P= principal, etc.) It is not necessary to record the questions of the moderator, however, it is preferable that they are numbered and arranged according to the question.

When capturing notable quotes, listen for well said quotes. Capture word for word as much of the statement as is possible. Listen for sentences or phrases that are particularly enlightening or eloquently express a particular point of view. Place name or initial of speaker after the quotations. Usually, it is impossible to capture the entire quote, but pay attention to key phrases. This will help search the exact quotes in the recorded statements. Use three periods ... to indicate that part of the quote is missing.

- In the oral summary section of the process, write short phrases or key words that express the key ideas that were discussed. Place an asterisk by those points where there was agreement by several people.
- Place your opinions, thoughts or ideas separately, or identify them as your own in the field notes, or keep them separate. If a question occurs to you that you would like to ask at the end of the discussion, write it down and border (box) it, so you will remember it.
- Note non-verbal activity as well. Watch for the obvious such as head nods, physical excitement, eye contact between certain participants, or other clues that would indicate agreement, disagreement, support, or interest.

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<sup>2</sup> These are responsibilities of the contractor as they are feasible. If there is another research member present (e.g., TEA staff), they should do as much as is possible to fulfill these tasks.

<sup>3</sup> Since we are not expecting one person to be able to take thorough notes and conduct the focus groups at the same time, subtle remark techniques can be used as recorded documentation--for instance stating "everyone is nodding," etc. Anything that is not disruptive and is natural and can function as a clue for the transcription could substitute taking notes effectively. This is highly desirable.

USE THIS AS A CHECKLIST BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE OFFICE AS WELL AS ON SITE.  
READ PRIOR TO ALL FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS:

### FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS INTRODUCTION & INSTRUCTIONS CHECKLIST

a. Fill out table below

District name	School name	TAPE NUMBER	Remarks

a1. Check in the boxes who is present and write in the lines below who else is present:

ABOUT THE PANEL			
Principal	Teacher	Counselor	Other (specify below)

Check here if task  
accomplished

b. Check out the space for plugs (computer and recorder)

Extra batteries.

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b.1 Extra tapes.

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c. Set up microphones on tables as close to all the speakers as is possible.

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c.1 As part of your test: say out loud the location, the date and anything else  
that you may find pertinent for the transcriptionist to write as identifier of  
the interview.

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Check here if task  
accomplished

- c.2 Check that every microphone is working properly. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. When the panel is together, make sure that you allow people to identify themselves on the tape. *Reassure them that they will not be identified in any personal way--it helps the transcriptionist identify microphone 1, microphone 2, etc.* \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Did you bring along?:
- copy of the TEA guide (\*mail xeroxes in advance) \_\_\_\_\_
  - The TEMPSC (\*mail xeroxes in advance) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Policy Research Report (\*mail in advance) \_\_\_\_\_
  - copy of the proposed legislative changes (\*mail xeroxes in advance) \_\_\_\_\_
  - poster-size flip charts \_\_\_\_\_
  - demographic page evaluation forms/ business reply envelopes \_\_\_\_\_
  - clock \_\_\_\_\_
- e.1 Make sure that you are set up unobtrusively,  
introduce your assistant(s) and state what their role(s) is (are). \_\_\_\_\_

## Content of Interview Protocols for Counselor & Principal

These are several of the topics that will be covered in the one-on-one interview with the principal and the counselor. *(to be mailed in advance)*

These are three important things to remember:

- Comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling programs are still in the making. There are no right or wrong programs. Please feel free to discuss these models whether you use them to evaluate and guide your program or not. What is important is your experience and what can be shared that works for you in order to provide your input into these efforts.
- These questions are framed in such a way that we discuss your experience and what we can learn from you. Feel free at any time to discuss how things should be, particularly as we refer to general concepts and goals of guidance for all students in Texas.
- These questions will be tailored to your needs. We would appreciate your sending prior to the interview any documentation or information about the unique features of your school that will enrich our discussion. Please contact Dr. Catherine Christner or Martha Perez if you have any question or discuss this when EGS Research and Consulting contacts you.

- School philosophy about the role or function of counseling and guidance *(goals)*.
- Development of these services in your school.
- Comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling program goals and functional organization.
- Resources available for the guidance program.
- Guidance program staff support. Teachers and administrators involvement in guidance, developmental transitions and the potential of integrated youth school services.
- Counselor supply and demand.
- Aspects of counseling and guidance programs: *career, personal development and academic*: emphasis and potential changes. Balance between prevention efforts and intervention. Description of successful counseling and guidance programs.
- Your evaluation of the counselor job description from TEA and evaluation of the TEMPSC.
- Your evaluation of your counseling and guidance program in terms of the needs of students.
- Counseling and guidance program indicators of success.
- Estimates of time and attention emphasis. Counselor/student ratio, ideal staffing configuration of your guidance programs.
- Time needed to provide services / obstruction to service provision.
- Policy related issues: Performance-based accountability systems and impact on district and counselor role.
- Student-centered comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling programs.
- The community's perspective: expectations and contribution, parental involvement, etc.
- Ideal support that policymakers can provide counselors. The counselor role in statute. The role of the ESC.

## COUNSELOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL<sup>1</sup>

To the interviewer: Introduction--Go through the same procedures for focus groups (check-up, introduction, etc. ) and TAILOR TO ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW.

1. Does your school have a stated philosophy about the role or function of counseling and guidance? What is the philosophy?

- What is the role of guidance in your school? What is the role of counseling in your school?<sup>2</sup>
- Historically, counseling, career guidance, academic guidance, and developmental guidance developed separately. The comprehensive model is an attempt to fuse all these into one. What is your experience concerning separate development? Has this affected you?

2. To what degree does this stated philosophy reflect what really happens in your school?

(goals vs. function)

- Who is involved in developing this policy in your school? (role of community)

3. From the counselor's perspective, what are the resources available for the guidance program in your school?

- What kind of resources (materials and equipment) does the guidance program have? What should these be? For instance:
- What is the staffing (administrative and secretarial support) of the guidance program? What should it be?
- Do you feel that the current budget fulfills the intent of the program?
- What kind of community resources are integrated into the guidance program? Do these help you make better use of your time?

3A. What is the configuration of guidance program staff support? (For instance:)

- How are teachers and administrators involved in your guidance program?
- How are developmental transitions supported within the district? Are these coordinated between schools?
- How do you view the prospect of integrated youth school services?

3B. Counselor supply and demand.

- How many times have you applied for a counselor position?
- When you were applying for a counselor position, were there many positions available?

4. Counseling and guidance programs have three parts: *career, personal development, and academic*.

To what extent does your counseling and guidance program provide a balance of services?

4A. Which component receives the greatest emphasis?

4B. Which component receives the least emphasis?

4C. Should changes be made?

- Do you feel that there is an appropriate balance between prevention efforts and intervention?

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<sup>1</sup> The bullets are to be used as prompts if those issues are not discussed when answering the actual question. They may also be used as instances to guide and direct the answer to the global question.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that "role" here is concerned more with the expectations and the goals than it is with the actual function.

6. How well does your counseling and guidance program serve the needs of all students?

- Are there some students who should receive more attention? Describe these students.

7. How do you know if your counseling and guidance program is successful?

7A. What are the indicators that tell you that your efforts are successful?

8. Here is a list of components<sup>4</sup> of a comprehensive guidance program and roles of the counselor (*Policy Research Report #5*, TEA guide). Based on your observations, which are the areas now being most emphasized in terms of the time you spend?

- If you had a magic wand, what would the counselor/student ratio be? Why?
- With the same magic wand, what would be the ideal configuration of your guidance programs? What would the staffing configuration be for other counselors, other professional personnel, social workers, clerical support and so on?

9. What interferes with the time needed to provide services?

10. In Texas, there are two formal role statements for guidance programs; one is the TEA comprehensive guidance program for Texas public schools presented in *Policy Research Report #5*, and the other is the Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC).

- How does the performance-based accountability system affect these programs?
- What role or influence have these statements had in your district?
- How do they affect your counselor's role?
- Do they make comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling programs student-centered?

11. Think about the counselor's role from a community perspective. What does the community expect of counselors? What can the community contribute to help make counselors successful?

- How can counselors and the community work better together?
- What would you need the community to know about your counselor to enhance his/her work?
- What is your perspective on integrated services in the school? How are other youth services coordinated in your community?
- How are parents involved?

11A. What is the ideal support that policy makers can provide guidance programs like the one on your campus?

- Should the statute defining the role of the grant counselors extend to all counselors?
- What should the role of the ESC's be?

12. Our purpose was to identify the multiple roles of counselors and identify duties that may interfere with the time needed to provide developmentally appropriate counseling services to students. Have we missed anything?

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<sup>4</sup> (Focus on Guidance Curriculum, Responsive Services, Individual Planning, Support Services, and Other.)

## PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

To the interviewer: Introduction--Go through the same procedures for focus groups (check-up, introduction, etc. ) and TAILOR TO ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW.

1. Does your school have a stated philosophy about the role or function of counseling and guidance? What is the philosophy?

- What is the role of guidance in your school? What is the role of counseling in your school? (Please note that "role" here is concerned more with the expectations and the goals than it is with the actual function.)
- Historically, counseling, career guidance, academic guidance, and developmental guidance developed separately. The comprehensive model is an attempt to fuse all these into one. What is your experience concerning separate development? Has this affected you?

2. To what degree does this stated philosophy reflect what really happens in your school?  
(goals vs. function)

- Who is involved in developing this policy in your school? (role of community)

3. From the principal's perspective, what are the resources available for the guidance program in your school?

- What kind of resources (materials and equipment) does the guidance program have? What should these be?
- What is the staffing (administrative and secretarial support) of the guidance program? What should it be?
- Do you feel that you have the budget to fulfill the intent of the program?
- What kind of community resources are integrated into the guidance program? Do these help you make better use of the counselor's time?

3A. What is the configuration of guidance program staff support?

- How are teachers involved in the guidance program?
- How are developmental transitions supported within the district? Are these coordinated between schools?
- How do you view the prospect of integrated youth school services?

3B. Counselor supply and demand: How does the hiring of a counselor take place on this campus?

- If there is a vacancy for a counseling position, typically, how many counselors apply?
- If resources were not an issue, would you hire another counselor?
- Given past experience, would you anticipate having trouble finding more counselors?
- What do you look for in a counselor--the ideal applicant?
- Is the teacher force a pool of prospective counselors?

4. To what extent does your counseling and guidance program provide a balance of services? Counseling and guidance programs have three parts: career, personal development and academic.

4A. Which component receives the greatest emphasis?

4B. Which component receives the least emphasis?

4C. Should changes be made?

- Do you feel that there is an appropriate balance between prevention efforts and intervention?
- What does a successful counseling and guidance program look like?

*(Interviewer: Discuss the survey duty table appropriate for that grade level. Show the selected tables from Policy Research Report #5, the TEA guide, and the TEMPSC.)*

5. What do you think of the counselor job description by the TEA? What do you think of this as a framework for guidance programs? What do the principal or other staff think of them?

- Think back to when you decided to hire a school counselor. Did you visualize his/her job being what it is today?

- What does a successful counseling and guidance program look like?  
(Interviewer: Discuss the survey duty table appropriate for that grade level. Show the selected tables from Policy Research Report #5, the TEA guide, and the TEMPSC.)
- 5. What do you think of the counselor job description by the TEA? What do you think of this as a framework for guidance programs? What do the principal or other staff think of them?
  - Think back to when you decided to become a school counselor. Did you visualize your job being what it is today?
- 6. How well does your counseling and guidance program serve the needs of all students?
  - Are there some students who should receive more attention? Describe these students.
- 7. How do you know if your counseling and guidance program is successful?
- 7A. What indicators tell you that your efforts are successful?
- 8. Here is a list of components<sup>3</sup> of a comprehensive guidance program and roles of the counselor (*Policy Research Report #5*, TEA guide). Based on your observations, which are the areas now being most emphasized in terms of the time you spend?
  - If you had a magic wand, what would the counselor/student ratio be? Why?
  - With the same magic wand, what would be the ideal configuration of your guidance programs? What would the staffing configuration be for other counselors, other professional personnel, social workers, clerical support and so on?
- 9. What interferes with the time needed to provide services?
- 10. In Texas, there are two formal role statements for guidance programs; one is the TEA comprehensive guidance program for Texas public schools summarized in *Policy Research Report #5*, and the other is the Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC).
  - How does the performance-based accountability system affect these programs, if at all?
  - What role or influence have these statements had in your district?
  - How do they affect your role as counselor?
  - Do they make comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling programs student-centered?
- 11. Think about the counselor's role from a community perspective. What does the community expect of counselors? What can the community contribute to help make counselors successful?
  - How can counselors and the community better work together?
  - What do you need the community to know about your work to enhance your work?
  - What is your perspective on integrated services in the school? How are other youth services coordinated in your community?
  - How are parents involved?
- 11A. What is the ideal support that policy makers can provide counselors?
  - Should the statute defining the role of the grant counselors extend to all counselors?
  - What should the role of the ESC's be?
- 12. Our purpose was to identify the multiple roles of counselors and identify duties that may interfere with the time needed to provide comprehensive and developmentally appropriate counseling services to students. Have we missed anything?

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<sup>3</sup> (Focus on Guidance Curriculum, Responsive Services, Individual Planning, Support Services, and Other.)

## PRE-INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

### READ TO RESPONDENTS BEFORE GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

#### 1. Purpose of the focus group discussion.

We have chosen the focus group method so that we can all learn from this discussion. We are hoping that by bringing together all kinds of people from your school and your community we will develop a deeper understanding of the roles and expectations that are placed on counseling and guidance programs. This study is about how guidance and counseling programs work and how they can be enhanced, *not about individual situations*.

We are all here together because we understand that the school takes care of more than students and staff's academic needs. More and more, counseling and guidance appears to be at the center of social and life skills demanded by the real world.

When students walk out the door every morning and come to school they come in as "whole" persons, that is, they do not leave "their personal selves" behind. We are here to discuss many aspects of your guidance program and how each one of us is part of it and how all of us can best contribute in order to meet the needs of youth from a holistic perspective.

#### 2. Explain the nature of the study.

I hope that all of you have been able to look through the material prior to the interview. We are here to learn from your experiences. The goal of this discussion/interview is:

- ★ to understand the current role of the counselor and the developmental guidance and counseling program
- ★ to seek avenues with which to enhance the transformation of these services into a comprehensive program.

#### 3. Anonymity/Confidentiality

- ★ Any comments made during the interview will remain anonymous in written reports from the study.
- ★ When they are transcribed, we ask the transcriptionist to identify voices and roles, not individuals. In our previous study, only the transcriptionist and the research team read these materials.
- ★ By the same token, we ask you to refrain from discussing comments made by specific individuals outside of this research context.

#### 4. Indicate that some questions will be difficult to answer.

You may find some of the questions difficult to answer. I must emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your knowledge and experience. At all times feel free to state how things *should* work, not only how they actually are.

#### 5. Indicate why we need to tape record.

The tape recorder is being used so that the interview can be conversational, not restricted by taking time to write down responses. Do you feel uncomfortable with the tape recorder? Again, I must reassure that school identification is only used for conducting data analysis and will not be identified in reports of findings.

#### 6. Materials to be discussed (*show materials*).

We will be going through some ideas brought up in these materials and feel free to look at these while we discuss them. Do you have copies of these materials?

**MODERATOR REMINDERS: Read the following prior to the focus groups *by yourself*:**

★ The voice of the counselor must have; the interviewer must be aware of the different points of view and center on the fact that the counselor is the one taking care of these aspects of school life.

★ It is important to frame questions in such a way that they become dimensions in an *evaluation* context. We are trying to evaluate the needs of the clientele and match the content of the program against those needs. These programs have not attained uniformity, thus the need to qualify role statements as "exploratory tools."

★ The moderator must remain aware of the direction of the topic and the time in which one would expect the issues to be covered. Let us say, estimating duration of 2 hours for 12 questions, we have 10 minutes discussion per question. If you have 6 people present, we are looking at about a 2 minute response per person.

★ The emphasis for the moderator is on grounding, observing, and monitoring. All persons present from the Agency or research team must introduce themselves and give some background. *However, only the moderator should be active in the interview. Those who are taking notes should only listen, take notes, and participate only if called upon.* When they are introduced, participants should be told what their role in the interview is. It is important that the equipment not be placed obtrusively. The microphones are already conspicuous. The computer and the tape recorder monitoring need to be on the side and taken care of by the assistant. The moderator will focus on the interview.

★ It is important to appear non-judgmental. Show concern and honor each point of view expressed. The need for a sense of "safety" is important. Moderators can validate their feelings by not being cold or impersonal, and must never hint that there is a right answer. Moderators or assistants must not express their opinions.

★ The moderator must emphasize that all viewpoints are necessary for this discussion to work--"not all people want to express their opinion, but most people are willing to tell their stories." *Moderator must prompt all participants to tell "their story."* Although flexibility is a desirable quality of the moderator, it is important that questions make it around the table.

★ Generalizations need to be rooted on specific accounts. Tendency of discussions to move toward generalities should be curbed by continued emphasis on the informants' personal experiences. It is also recommended that the introduction states that *the research team is there to learn from them*, as opposed to giving too many details from the beginning.

Do not let this turn into a "gripe session." "Almost anyone will speak to somebody that wants to hear his/her problems." Keep focused on pragmatic aspects of the discussion. Listen respectfully and actively transform discussion into the issue as it leads to the next question or the next person to speak up. *Do not follow up on these tangents.*

**BEST COPY AVAILABLE**

Materials for focus group participants--(Mail in advance)

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Thank you very much for participating in the focus group discussion of the Study of Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling Programs. We want to learn about your guidance and counseling program. We also want this discussion to be of benefit to you. The perspectives of those who collaborate in the provision of guidance and counseling services and those who receive them is very valuable and may shed light on how to enhance these services.

Please share with us any kind of written mission statements or developmental guidance philosophy, evaluation, or planning documentation that you have prepared regarding your counseling and guidance program. Please mail these to us in advance, if possible. This can help us better understand your efforts. If there is other non-written information you want to share with us, you may call Dr. Christner or Ms. Perez at (512) 463-9701.

The Study of Comprehensive Developmental Guidance and Counseling Programs is a continuation of the five-year evaluation of the impact of educational reform on students identified as at risk. One of the recommendations of that study was to "examine the multiple roles of counselors and identify duties that may interfere with the time needed to provide developmentally appropriate counseling services to students." We want to learn about your guidance program and how it touches your everyday lives.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we are asking, but rather, your experience. It is critical that clients and providers of student support services: (1) express their needs and expectations, (2) determine whether those needs and expectations are being met, and/or (3) describe how to enhance these processes to attain excellence and equity for all Texas students.

Please share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. You may feel that many of these questions are abstract because they are drawn from the assumptions embedded in general models of guidance programs. Please help us learn about your needs by grounding your responses to these questions in the reality of your experience at this campus.

During the focus group, you will be asked to examine aspects of the guidance program related to four central areas:

- ★ the history and development of your school's program,
- ★ the organization of your program,
- ★ policy issues affecting your program, and
- ★ the needs of your community .

## Content of Focus Group Protocol

These are several of the topics that will be covered in the focus group discussion. *(to be mailed in advance)*

- School philosophy about the role of counseling and guidance (goals).
- Development of these services in your school.
- Guidance and counseling program goals and organization.
- Aspects of counseling and guidance programs: career, personal development and academic: emphasis and potential changes. Evaluating your program in terms of the balance between prevention efforts and intervention. Description of successful counseling and guidance programs.
- Evaluation of your counseling and guidance program in terms of the needs of students.
- Discussion of successful program characteristics.
- The TEA comprehensive developmental model and how well it fits your needs. Your evaluation of the counselor job description (TEA, TEMPSC).
- The counselor's role from your community's perspective. Community expectations, contribution, and involvement. Parental involvement, etc.

## ADULT FOCUS GROUP

1. Does your school have a stated philosophy about the role or function of counseling and guidance? What is the philosophy? Who was involved in developing this policy? (role of community)
2. To what degree does this stated philosophy reflect what really happens in your school?

### Chart I

3. Counseling and guidance programs have three parts: career, personal development and academic. To what extent does your counseling and guidance program provide a balance of services?

Take a moment and rate your counseling and guidance program in terms of how well it provides services for career development, personal development and academic development. Let's use the traditional school grading system of A through F. Give a grade to how well your program meets the career needs, the personal needs of students and the academic aspects.

- 3A. Which component receives the greatest emphasis?
- 3B. Which component receives the least emphasis?
- 3C. Should changes be made?
4. How well does your counseling and guidance program serve the needs of all students?
- 4A. Are there some students who should receive more attention? Describe these students.
5. Do you feel that there is an appropriate balance between prevention efforts and intervention?
6. What does a successful counseling and guidance program look like?

### Chart II

7. Here is a list of components of a comprehensive school guidance program and roles of the counselor. Based on your observations, indicate your best estimate of where time and attention is now being placed. When you are finished, tell us how you feel time and attention **SHOULD BE** divided among the components. Use 100 percentage points to divide among the categories (curriculum, responsive, individual, support).

- 7A. Let's compare results (make chart as each person discusses their responses).
- 7B. Are the areas with the greatest gap the areas where we should place greater attention? Explain.
- 7C. What interferes with the time needed to provide these services?

8. In Texas, there are two formal role statements for guidance programs; one is the TEA comprehensive guidance program for Texas public schools presented in Policy Research Report #5, and the other is the Texas Evaluation Model for Professional School Counselors (TEMPSC).

What role or influence have these statements had in your district?

9. Think about the counselor's role from a community perspective. What does the community expect of counselors? What can the community contribute to help make counselors successful? How can counselors and the community work together?
10. Our purpose was to identify the multiple roles of counselors and identify duties that may interfere with the time needed to provide developmentally appropriate counseling services to students.  
Have we missed anything?

Before you answer this question, our assistant will provide an overview of what has been discussed. This summary will highlight important issues that we may have missed.

*(Present oral summary. After final reactions ask if there is anything else that needs to be discussed.)*  
Anything else that we need to discuss?

**STUDENT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL--**

*MODERATOR: READ ON YOUR OWN BEFORE SITE VISIT  
& USE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION DURING TELEPHONE CALLS*

We will ask for a sample of students from each school to be interviewed. We will describe what is desirable and possible, but the principal will assign the class.

CONSTRAINTS TO CONSIDER ON SELECTING A CLASS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- The younger the students, the harder it may be to ask questions concerning guidance and counseling. It is difficult to make meaningful contact with young people in a large group. Interviews like this one may be more difficult with elementary students (Preferably above 4th grade).
- A small group (less than 10) would be good, simply because that gives the interviewers an opportunity to prompt all students to participate.
- Participation is by choice. Always give the children that option. However, they need to know that they cannot leave the classroom and that they need to do schoolwork instead. Principals may want to provide activities or other tasks for students who do not wish to participate.
- Concentrate on the population segments that are most representative of the school and will provide the most meaningful information concerning these programs. With students, it is best to use a small class. Different types of students (at-risk, honors, gifted and talented, and the like) from different schools provide important information.
- Remind yourself that the moderator has to be extremely active and has to keep the students focused. When all the students speak at one time, keep all the students in the discussion by asking them to state their views by raising their hands or any other means to get their attention and focus. Children need more movement in order to pay attention for long periods of time.
- The questionnaire needs to be very structured. In this way, the students can concentrate on the topic.
- In middle schools keep an eye open for gender interaction. If having co-ed groups proves to be obstructive to the goals of the study, make sure that at the next middle school you request to be provided with students of the same gender

## Content of Student Focus Group Protocol & Survey

These are several of the topics that will be covered in the student focus group discussion and survey. *(to be mailed in advance)*

### CONTENT OF STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONS

Students will be given a written survey to facilitate discussion and provide structure to the focus group discussion from the beginning. Survey has three responses, so students do not have to give any details at this point. All they have to do is respond in writing "agree," "disagree" or "don't know." The focus group discussion will then relate back to some of these answers (below).

The survey has questions concerning student opinions on the following:

- number of times students have seen the counselor since the beginning of the school year (written response);
- how they view changes in themselves and their worldview;
- motivation and self-identity, career objectives as related to counseling;
- schoolwork motivation, meaning of academic performance as related to self-esteem;
- self-esteem and performance on tests;
- excitement about learning in relationship to their sense of self-esteem;
- perceptions of counselor's availability; and
- perceptions of the counselor.

### CONTENT OF STUDENT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

- Discussion of survey content by type of group response.
- Evaluation of services from the counselor or the counseling program.
- Discussion of services from the perspective of student's needs-- usefulness in terms of making career decisions, personal development and academic growth.
- Discussion of services concerning students who should receive more attention.

<b>MODERATOR MATERIALS--READ OUT LOUD BEFORE STUDENT FOCUS GROUP</b>
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### **Introduction & Instructions for Student Focus Groups**

Give time to the teacher to finish his/her activities and leave the room. Use this time to set up the microphones. In most places the desks have to be arranged in a circular fashion.

- State the purpose of the study (*breaking the ice*).

*Our purpose is to identify the role of counselors and identify ways in which the counseling services help students like you.*

*I am (interviewer's name) and I am conducting work for the Texas Education Agency's Policy Analysis and Evaluation Division? Do you know what we do? Well, we are conducting research about counseling programs across the state and how they reach students like yourselves.<sup>1</sup>*

We are going to be asking a few questions about the counseling and guidance program in your school. We want you to tell us how these services work and how they can improve.

**BEST COPY AVAILABLE**

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<sup>1</sup> Try to use the same terms that you hear students use when they answer these questions.

## Student Survey

Thank you for participating and helping us learn about your counseling and guidance program. Do not write in your name so that you are not identified.

What is the name *[of the program where you see]* your counselor? \_\_\_\_\_

How many times have you seen the counselor since the beginning of the school year (include guidance classes and office visits)? \_\_\_\_\_

Keeping my options open (check ✓ one column →)	agree	disagree	don't know
1. The <i>[counselor name/the guidance program name]</i> helps me:			
A understand the good things about myself ;			
B see myself and the world in new ways;			
C understand how the things I learn in school will help me become what I want to be;			
D understand the good things about my homework;			
E understand how feeling good about myself can help me feel good about my school work;			
F understand how important it is to take tests--like the TAAS;			
G understand how feeling good about myself and doing my school work makes it easier for me to pass tests--like the TAAS;			
3. I am excited about the work we are doing in the <i>[guidance program]</i> .			
4. The counselor is there when I need to talk to him or her.			
5. I see the counselor <b>only</b> when I am in trouble.			
6. The counselor is fun to be around.			

Thank you again for participating and helping us learn about your school.

## Student Focus Group

1. Please take a moment and fill out this one page survey. When you are finished we will discuss it.  
*(Pass out survey and allow 5-8 minutes for completion or go over with them question by question-- particularly for younger students. When they are finished proceed with the questions.)*

For students in elementary grades, go over it with them and answer their questions as you go along with concrete examples.

2. Let's go around the table and list those items that you disagree with.

Give me the number of the categories where you have checked disagree.

*(Moderator makes a list on a large one page chart of those most frequently cited. When finished, select those which have been most frequently cited and ask students to explain.)*

3. How have you used *[name of program]* counseling and guidance in the last three years?

4. How has it been helpful to you?

5. What do you think the *[name of program]* should be doing?

6. How could they be more helpful to you? How could they be more helpful to other students?

(Middle and High School only) (CHART 1)

7. The guidance / counseling programs are designed to provide assistance with:

- making career decisions,
- personal development and
- academic growth.

For which one do you see your counselor?

7A. Which aspect receives the least emphasis?

7B. Which aspect receives the most emphasis?

7C. Should changes be made?

8. Are there some students who should receive more attention? Describe them.

9. Our purpose is to identify the role of counselors and identify ways in which the counseling services help students. Have we missed anything?

participant	Guidance Curriculum	Responsive Services	Individual Planning	System Support	Other
Ideal					
Current					
Ideal					
Current					
Ideal					
Current					
Ideal					
Current					
Ideal					
Current					
Ideal					
Current					
Ideal					
Current					
Ideal					
Current					
Ideal					
Current					
Ideal					
Current					

participant	Academic	Career	Personal
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
#5			
#6			
#7			
#8			
#9			
#10			
#11			

	Guidance Curriculum	Responsive Services	Individual Planning	System Support	Other
Ideal					
Current					

Study of Guidance and Counseling Programs 1995--Focus Group Charts (individual)

	Guidance Curriculum	Responsive Services	Individual Planning	System Support	Other
Ideal					
Current					

participant	Academic	Career	Personal

participant	Academic	Career	Personal

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### **TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION**

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

- (1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;
- (2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a nonsegregated basis;
- (3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;
- (4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;
- (5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;
- (6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and
- (7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

### **TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 AS AMENDED BY THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1972; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; EQUAL PAY ACT OF 1964; TITLE IX, EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED; IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT OF 1986; AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990; AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1991.**

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